

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

No. 930.

NEW YORK, MARCH 29, 1916.

Price 5 Cents.



As the truth flashed upon him, Bert partly turned to summon help. But as he did so he caught one brief glimpse of a dark form over him, and then he was hurled with fearful force into the burning shaft.

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Stories of Adventure

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Resolute No. 10

— OR —

THE BOY FIRE COMPANY OF FULTON

By EX-FIRE CHIEF WARDEN

CHAPTER I.

A BRAVE RESCUE.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

"Fire! Fire!" was the terrified cry, following sharp upon the ringing alarm bell, and which in an instant aroused the whole town of Fulton.

What will cause such great excitement in such an incredible space of time as an alarm of fire? Fulton was quite a good-sized town, in fact, a small city, and of late fires had been frequent. Indeed, so frequent that the supposition that they arose from natural causes was abandoned for the apparent certainty of incendiary work.

For twelve months past Fulton had been cursed with a secret gang of incendiaries. At any hour of the day or night, in some part of the town, a blaze was likely to spring up. But not a trace of the incendiaries could be found.

As a result it had been found necessary to adopt every device for instant action in putting out the fires. New fire companies were organized, both at the expense of the town and private individuals. Every man who was able to carry a bucket or run with the machine was supposed to be ready as a volunteer fireman at an instant's notice.

So, with an alarm of fire, men frequently closed their shops and stores and sent their clerks and employees to the scene of danger. Artisans left their benches, bookkeepers their desks, laborers their pick and shovel, and putting out the fire was made a common cause.

Yet there were but few men in all the volunteer squad fitted to cope with the perils of a fireman's life. The chief of the fire department, bluff Ben Houston, generally kept the crowd back until such time as the regular fire boys found the flames beyond their control, then he would take his pick of the volunteers.

Thus confusion was avoided, and as Ben was the acknowledged leader, everybody heeded his commands.

Upon the present day, it was but a little past the hour of noon when the fire bells rang.

In Fulton Academy Professor Barton was engaged in hearing the recitation of the Cicero class.

But the instant that the clangor of the bells arose every boy in the class sprang to his feet. The professor dropped his book and also sprang up.

"It is a fire, boys!" cried handsome Bert White, the leader of the class and a general favorite in the school. "Come on, all together. We must help put it out."

"Hurrah!" cried the boys. "Go ahead, Bert; we will follow."

Ordinarily Professor Barton might have restrained them, but of late a fire alarm had the effect of dismissing schools or even the breaking up of church services.

Bert White led the way out of the academy grounds. The moment he struck the street instinct seemed to tell him where the fire was.

Up one street and down another the boys ran. Soon the flames were seen and an awful cry escaped Bert's lips.

"My soul, boys," he gasped, "it is Mr. Faulkner's fine residence."

This was the truth. The mansion of the mill owner was in a speedy way to destruction. Flames were bursting from every corner of the aristocratic dwelling.

The academy boys were almost the first upon the scene. Up a side street came a fire company, Wide Awake No. 4. Old Ben Houston was in the lead with his trumpet. Every man on the line looked fit to drop. It did not seem as if they could stagger another step.

"Catch on, boys!" shouted Bert White, excitedly. "Give them a lift—all hands, now!"

With a cheer the boys responded. The exhausted men were relieved, and the machine went up to the burning house in double-quick time.

Fortunately there was a small lake in the rear of the dwelling. A line of hose was run to this, and then men and boys went to work at the pumps.

A stream of water was got upon the flames in an incredible space of time. Other fire companies now arrived and quick work was made. But, rapid as the work was, it was evident that the noble dwelling was doomed.

The work of the incendiary had been skilfully done. It had been executed at a favorable time, when the servants were all away, without one exception, and Mr. Faulkner was at his office.

The only occupants of the house had been the cook and Mr. Faulkner's ward, a young lady of eighteen, Eva Montrose.

When he first arrived upon the scene, Mr. Faulkner had been so excited that he had not once thought of the occupants of the house. Now he began to rush about in an agonized manner.

"Where is Eva? Has anybody seen my ward?" he cried excitedly. "Oh, I fear she has not escaped from the house and is suffocated in her room."

Ben Houston heard this and his face turned ashen pale.

"Heavens! Do you think she is still in the house, Mr. Faulkner?" he asked, with horror.

"Oh, I am sure of it!" groaned the mill-owner. "She was ill and unable to leave her room when I came away this morning. Oh, I must save her!"

Mr. Faulkner would have rushed into the flames himself, but strong arms restrained him. As it happened, Bert White had heard all.

"Somebody must go to her rescue!" cried Ben Houston, loudly. "Who will volunteer?"

There was an instant's silence. It was no light undertaking to enter the burning dwelling now. Again it was hardly likely that the unfortunate young girl was alive. But a tall, manly form stepped forward and a ringing voice cried:

"I will go."

"You!" cried Ben Houston, gazing at Bert White in amazement. "You are only a boy."

"Never mind!" cried Bert, throwing off his coat. "Some day I'll be a man. Which is the young lady's room, Mr. Faulkner?"

"The second story, left stairway, and east corner of the house," replied the mill owner, in an agonizing voice. "My check for one thousand dollars to the man who will save her!"

Bert White did not hear the last. He was already on his way to the rescue. Great volumes of smoke were pouring out of the doorway, but Bert did not stop.

He unhesitatingly plunged into the suffocating mass, and made a blind groping dash for the stairs.

The air current came down from the upper story.

Of course it carried smoke with it, but Bert got down upon his hands and knees and groped his way up the stairs.

It was an awful ordeal, such as few can understand who have not had a similar experience. But Bert White never faltered.

By placing his face as closely to the floor as possible he managed to get a breath of air now and then. Up, up he went, and reached the first landing.

This was but half of his journey gained, however, for Eva Montrose's room was on the second floor. But fortunately, here he encountered a draught of fresh air, which revived him greatly.

He made his way along the wall by feeling with his hands in the direction of what he believed was the last corner of the house.

He passed two doors opening into the chambers filled with flame and smoke. At each door he called loudly, in order to make sure that no living occupants were there.

Then he reached the stairway leading to the upper floor. Up these stairs he rushed blindly.

He had barely reached the landing when to his ears above the roar of flame and smoke, came a faint, choking cry. It thrilled Bert through and through.

"Have courage!" he shouted, bravely. "Help is coming. Don't give up."

With a quick push of his shoulders, Bert forced the door in. A great volume of smoke rushed out, and then he stumbled over an object on the floor. He put out his hands and felt on this object. It was a human form.

That it was Eva Montrose in an unconscious state he felt sure. Bending over her, Bert hastily felt her pulse. To his joy it yet beat regularly.

She was not dead. Bert had now strong hopes of saving her. Her dress was on fire, but he quickly smothered the flames.

Then he lifted her in his arms with the impulse of getting her out of the burning dwelling as rapidly as possible.

He rushed out into the hall. A current of air dispelled the smoke. Bert saw the stairway, but—merciful heavens! Before his eyes they crashed and fell. A mighty volume of flame and smoke being hurled aloft from the recess made.

To advance toward that seething hell of fire meant death. He retreated in horror.

At this moment, the draught of cool air revived the young girl and she opened her eyes and looked up into Bert's face. The hall was now quite clear of smoke.

"Have no fear, miss," said Bert, reassuringly. "I am here to save you, do not move."

But at that moment the doomed house shook to its foundation. Bert felt the floor shaking and the timbers were flying about him in the wildest confusion.

CHAPTER II.

RESOLUTE—NO. 10.

Only the bravest heart and the steadiest nerve could long withstand such an ordeal as this. The fact was, one wall of the house had crumbled outward, and the flames, now given full sweep, were rushing madly on to swallow up the whole.

But little time was left in which to act. Bert realized this full well.

All in that swift, awful moment of horror and uncertainty a thought had occurred to him.

By making an appearance at a window it might be possible that those outside could hoist a ladder. He hastened to execute the plan.

Dashing into the room which was nearest he rushed to the window. In spite of the cloud of smoke, he was able to lean far out over the sill and shout loudly:

"Help! help! fetch a ladder. Quick, or we perish!"

A wild cry went up from the thousands below. They saw the young academy student at the window, and the slender female form in his arms.

"Hurrah! He has got her. She is safe!" shouted the frantic crowd. "Up with the ladders. They must be saved."

Many and willing hands ran up the long ladder. It just touched the sill. Bert murmured a prayer of thanks and then experienced a sudden faintness.

But he mastered it, and climbed onto the ladder. He did not attempt to descend it by means of the rungs, but throwing both legs around it, slid down to the ground.

Up to this moment he had held the helpless form of Eva Montrose in his arms. But he now relaxed his hold. Exhausted nature asserted itself. He could do no more, the limit was reached, and he fell back insensible.

But tender hands lifted him and carried him into a house near. Mr. Faulkner personally cared for him and sent frantically for doctors.

The mill owner's excitement and joy at the rescue of his ward knew no bounds. He was anxious to show his appreciation of the services done him in every tangible way.

Eva Montrose had quickly recovered from her faint and was found to be uninjured. She was yet weak from the effects of her sickness, which she declared the excitement of the occasion had dispelled.

But her brave young rescuer was suffering from several severe burns. However, after his injuries had been properly dressed and he was given a vivifying draught he was once more himself, in a practical sense.

Mr. Faulkner overwhelmed him with expressions of gratitude.

"My boy!" he said, fulsomely, "I want you to come to my office to-night. I want to talk with you. Promise me truly."

"Very well, sir," replied Bert.

"Your name is Bert White?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. I know your mother, young man. I have to congratulate her for having so upright and plucky a young man for a son."

Bert murmured his thanks modestly and then went home. He related all to Mrs. White, a sweet-faced lady, of former great beauty, who listened with a warrantable thrill of maternal pride to her son's great achievement.

"Mr. Faulkner was very profuse in his gratitude, mother," said Bert. "By the way, he mentioned the fact that he knew you."

Mrs. White gave a start. She had never intimated the fact before of an acquaintance in early life with the mill owner. In fact, she might have went further and told the truth that Mr. Faulkner was once one of her youthful beaux.

"Yes," she replied, evasively, "Mr. Faulkner is an old acquaintance of myself and your father."

"Mother, you have never told me all about my father. Is it true as people say he went to California and died in the mines? Oh, if I only knew that he was alive."

"Indeed, my son, I think my cup of happiness would be filled to the very brim did I know that your father was alive. I know as little of his fate as you."

Bert drew nearer, and a wistful light shone in his eyes.

"Oh, tell me about my father. Why did he leave home when I was but a babe? Why not tell me all, mother. I can bear it for I am almost a man. I was nineteen two months ago."

Mrs. White hesitated but a moment. Then she made reply:

"Well, Bert, it is no more than right that I should tell you the sad story. Twenty-one years ago we were happily married, your father and I. At that time he was a prosperous member of the firm of White & Dunham, merchants.

"We lived happily together for three years. That was the sum total of my life's happiness. One day your father was found in his offices over the dead body of his partner and with his blood upon his hands. It was known that he and Oscar Dunham had quarreled. The evidence was against him and he was sentenced to be hanged.

"To the last your father contended that he was innocent and that he would prove it. He was not hanged for he broke jail and fled to the West. I have never heard from him since, except that he had died in the western mines. Now you know all."

For a moment Bert White was silent. There was a strange, hard light in his eyes; there were blue lines about his set lips.

"At last I can understand it," he said, in a constrained voice. "That is why people look at me upon the street and make silent remarks. That is why, by a certain few snobbish people, I am treated so coolly. Mother, tell me God's truth, do you believe my father was a murderer?"

Mrs. White drew a gasping breath, so great was the shock of

this question. But she composed herself, and looking into her son's eyes, said with great fervor:

"Herbert, my son, from that moment it has been my religious faith that the old adage of 'murder will out,' will be verified in this case. As God is my witness, I believe your father innocent."

Bert brought his clenched hands together forcibly. There was a light of stern resolution in his eyes.

"Then it was all a foul wrong," he declared, intensely. "And bear me witness, high hosts of heaven, it shall be the aim and the duty of my life to prove my father's innocence."

With a great cry, Mrs. White flung her arms about her son's neck.

"Oh, Bert," she cried. "If you could only succeed."

"Of course it will be difficult," declared Bert, more calmly. "The affair happened years ago. But there were no extenuating proofs, mother? What was my father's defense?"

"Your father's story was in substance as follows," said Mrs. White. "He had quarreled a few moments before with Oscar Dunham and went out upon the street. When he came in again Dunham lay upon the office floor. Your father bent down to turn him over, when his hands became smeared with blood. To his horror he found a dirk knife imbedded in his heart. At that moment two business men chanced to come into the office. Of course, when the authorities began the investigation they arrested the man against whom the evidence was the strongest. All the circumstances were unfortunate."

"But who could have murdered Dunham? What was the motive?"

"Without doubt it was robbery. A back door was open and a thousand dollars in bills gone from the safe. Your father could not prove that the money had been there, though, and no other clue was found. Accordingly, the evidence all turned against him."

Later in the day Bert White, with his mind yet in a whirl from the exciting events of the day went down to the Academy ball field. To his surprise he found the boys not engaged in playing ball, but congregated in one corner of the grounds.

"Hello! Bert White," was the cry.

"Hurrah for Bert!"

"He is the hero of this academy."

"We will vote him chief."

"What's all this?" exclaimed Bert, in surprise. "Where is that match game of ball?"

"No more ball for to-day," cried Gus Kircher, an athletic young fellow. "We have got a new scheme on hand."

"I say, Bert, that was a mighty fine thing you did at the fire," cried Will Evans. "The people are talking it all over town."

"All right, boys," said Bert, modestly. "That's enough of that. Now what of your scheme?"

"It's a big one," said Gus, confidently. "You know there's a good many fires nowadays. They don't give the academy boys a show to help put out a fire because they haven't got firemen's shirts on. Now we think we can do as big work as anybody. We are all nineteen years of age, and what we intend to do is to form a fire company, make the town give us a machine, and go in for business. How is that for high?"

Bert was overwhelmed with the idea.

"Grand!" he cried, eagerly. "Why, boys, that is a fine idea. I am with you."

"Hurrah!" cried the boys in chorus. "And we have elected you foreman, Bert."

Bert was cornered. With flushed cheeks he stood among his young friends. It was a happy moment for him, for secretly he felt sure that he could creditably fill the position.

Therefore, he accepted the office, and at once the matter was fully discussed, the boys even going so far as to make rules then and there and settle upon the name of the company.

"There are already nine companies in Fulton," declared Gus Kircher. "We shall be No. 10. I move that we become Resolute No. 10."

Cheers greeted this suggestion and the name was adopted. Then the boys dispersed, not, however, without having drawn up a petition for incorporation and a machine, to be presented by the town government.

Bert remembered his appointment with Mr. Faulkner, now, and as it was near the hour, hastened to the mill owner's office.

Fortunately Mr. Faulkner had been able to rent a furnished house, so that his inconvenience from the loss of his fine residence would be but temporary.

Bert had reached the counting room door, when an incident occurred. Suddenly from the shadows of the doorway a snarling cur leaped forth and fastened his teeth in Bert's leg.

With a sharp cry of pain, the young student raised his foot and promptly kicked the cur down the steps. At the same moment the door opened, and an insolent voice cried:

"What did you kick that dog for, you young pauper? That's my dog. Take that!"

Bert received a stinging blow across the cheek from a pair of kid gloves held in the hands of a tall, foppishly-dressed young man. In that flash of time Bert recognized him as Clyde Faulkner, the mill owner's son.

Had he been king of Britain, it would have mattered little to impulsive and maddened Bert White, who seized him by the collar and flung him down the steps.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE DANCE.

Down the steps after his dog Mr. Clyde Faulkner went, and picked himself up a second later in a crushed and soiled state.

"Hey, you young beggar," he howled madly, "how dare you touch me? I'll break your neck for that. Take that."

Up the steps Clyde Faulkner sprang and aimed a blow at Bert with his cane. But the latter caught it in his hand and wrenched it from the fop's grasp.

"Stand back, sir, or it will be the worse for you," he said, resolutely.

There was that of command which restrained young Faulkner. At that moment the counting room door opened, and Mr. Faulkner rushed out.

He had seen all from a window. He confronted his son sternly.

"Clyde, how dare you insult this young man?" he demanded. "He is the benefactor of our family."

"Insult him!" howled Clyde. "Why, he is the one who insulted me."

"Don't tell me that," cried Mr. Faulkner, angrily. "I saw it all. Your dog bit him, and I fear seriously. You must dispose of that cur, Clyde."

Then turning to Bert, Mr. Faulkner said:

"Please accept my apology, Bert, for the rude conduct of my son. He is in a bad temper to-day. Are you badly wounded?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Bert, readily. "It was only a scratch. No apology is necessary, sir. It is only a little misunderstanding."

"I am glad that you are of such a forgiving disposition, Bert. Walk in."

Bert did walk in and sat down in a chair. Mr. Faulkner closed the door, and sat at his desk.

"Bert, I could not fittingly express my gratitude to you to-day, so that is why I have called you here," said the mill owner.

"Indeed, sir, pray thank me no more," said Bert, readily. "I have been only too glad to be able to serve you, sir."

"I am very much interested in you, my boy. I knew your father well before—before he died."

Bert averted his gaze. He knew that Mr. Faulkner knew the particulars of his father's disgrace.

"Your father was a man of honor," went on the mill owner. "And I believe you are his prototype. I feel sure you will make your mark yet, Bert White. It will be one of the greatest pleasures of my life to help you."

"I thank you for your kind interest."

"You rendered me a great service to-day. Miss Eva wishes me to express her gratitude to you. I am happy in making you this small return."

A handsome bank check with the figures \$1,000 upon it fluttered into Bert's lap. He picked it up like one in a daze.

"No, Mr. Faulkner," he said determinedly. "While I would not have you misunderstand my motive, I cannot take the money."

The mill owner was astonished. For a moment he could not speak.

"You refuse it?" he ejaculated.

"I am bound to do so."

"But may I ask why?"

"For certain reasons which I do not care to express. I appreciate your kindness, Mr. Faulkner, but the debt is nothing. I cannot accept the check."

"But this is unfair," expostulated Mr. Faulkner. "You give me no opportunity to reciprocate."

All in that instant an idea struck Bert. His face lit up quickly.

"Mr. Faulkner," he exclaimed suddenly, "you have a certain amount of fear that the incendiaries may fire your mills?"

"I do," admitted the mill owner.

"Very good. There are now nine fire companies in Fulton. If another was added it would only enhance the safety of your mills as well as other property, would it not?"

"Certainly."

"Well, with such an idea in view, twenty of our academy boys have formed a company to be known as Resolute No. 10. But we have no machine. The town may object to granting us one. If you think it would be money well invested——"

"Enough!" cried Mr. Faulkner, eagerly. "Will it please you if I purchase an engine with this money for Resolute No. 10?"

"Very much, sir."

"It shall be done!" cried Mr. Faulkner, forcibly. "I approve heartily of your scheme and wish you success. More than that; I own a building near the academy which can be converted into a good engine house. You shall have that, rent free. I am with you."

Bert left the mill office in a joyful frame of mind. He could not wait, but hastened at once to break the good news to the boys.

Great enthusiasm greeted the report, and Gus Kircher cried:

"After all, it may be money well invested by Mr. Faulkner. It is additional protection to his mills."

The engine arrived in a few days, and it was a beauty. At the first trial the boys threw the largest and highest stream of water ever thrown by a Fulton company. This created a sensation.

After class all the boys would repair to the new engine house, which was fitted up finely. Indeed, it got to be quite the thing to meet at the house of Resolute No. 10.

All the boys had natty uniforms—red shirts, helmets and top boots, with silver trumpets. They made a fine show at parade, and finally capped the climax by declaring an eclat dance, a select party to be held in the engine house.

The best people of Fulton graced the occasion with their presence. A fine orchestra discoursed music, and a merry time was indulged in until the midnight hours.

Bert White always counted it one of the happiest evenings of his life.

As the handsome, brave young foreman of the company, he was the lion of the evening. Everybody paid court to him, and he danced three dances with charming Eva Montrose, who seemed charmed with the boy fire chief, as indeed he was with her. He thought her the loveliest young girl he had ever seen, and she accounted him the manliest, handsomest young fellow she had ever met.

When their fingers touched in the dance Eva blushed and her eyes sparkled, while Bert experienced an electric thrill. Oh, it was the sowing of those seeds which ripen into love.

Matters went on swimmingly until after Bert's last dance with Eva.

Clyde Faulkner had watched Bert pay his attentions to the young girl with a jealous thrill.

The young fop was enamored of the heiress. It nettled him to see Bert White, whom he regarded as little better than a beggar, winning such favor in Eva's eyes.

So he stared rudely at the young fireman, made offensive remarks in his hearing, and did other mean things, which Bert, out of respect to Mr. Faulkner, bore patiently.

But human endurance has a limit, and this had been reached when affairs took a new and sudden turn.

A tall, dark-featured man of middle age, not unhandsome, but possessed of strange, glittering eyes, entered the hall. He was fashionably dressed, and wore an eye-glass.

He gave the assembly a sweeping glance, and then made straight for Clyde Faulkner.

"Ah—how d'ye do, Mr. Lester Dane?" simpered Clyde, extending his hand. "Glad to see you. What is new?"

Dane scowled, ignored the proffered hand, and muttered hastily:

"No fooling about it, Clyde, I want to see you in private. I tell you I can't cash that I. O. U. Nobody will take it. I've got to have the money."

"Aw—have you?" exclaimed Clyde, with an affectation of dismay. "What's to be done? The governor would kill me if he knew it, don't you know?"

"Blow the governor. I tell you I've got to have money," declared Mr. Lester Dane.

Then he paused, and his glittering eyes were fixed upon the form of Eva Montrose gliding fairy-like through a waltz.

"Curse her! If it were not for her," he muttered sotto voce, "I'd have a fortune in my grasp now. I could ride in a chariot

of gold if I had what rightfully belongs to me and what old Faulkner holds in trust for her. Curse her again. I could twist that lily-white neck of hers."

This was not intended for other ears. Clyde Faulkner did not hear it, but Bert White did. Lester Dane had not observed the young fireman's proximity.

Bert's face turned white. The words of the stranger, directed so harshly against the girl he admired, stirred his whole being. Another fact thrilled him queerly.

What manner of hold had this villainous Dane upon the brainless Clyde Faulkner? Here was a mystery.

"Well, my deah boy," said young Faulkner, deprecatingly, "I've done the best I could, don't you know. I can't get the money of the governor to-night anyway."

"But I must have it."

"Wait till to-morrow."

"No. I must have it to-night," insisted Dane. "If you don't furnish it within an hour I'll betray you."

Clyde turned ghastly white and his knees shook. He mopped the perspiration from his brow.

"Great heavens, man!" he gasped, despairingly, "what am I to do?"

Dane's eyes glittered.

"There is one thing you can do," he declared. "You know what. Come, no fooling about it. Will you come?"

Something like a groan escaped Faulkner, and he turned and followed Lester Dane out of the hall.

Bert White, unobserved, had heard all, and he was thunder-struck, as well as undecided what to do.

"I wonder what they are up to?" he muttered. "It is no good deed. I ought to follow them."

It was possible that the young fireman might have yielded to such an impulse, but at this moment Mr. Faulkner came up to him with fearful pallid face. In his hand he held a crudely written note.

"Somebody just left this with the doorkeeper for me," he gasped. "What do you think of it?"

Dumfounded Bert read the following:

"MR. FAULKNER—At half past twelve your mills will be fired. You cannot save them. It is the decree of

"THE AVENGER."

At first Bert was inclined to denounce the message as a hoax. But something restrained him and he exchanged glances with Mr. Faulkner and then both glanced at the engine-house clock. It lacked but a few seconds of half past twelve, and in verification of the strange warning an awful sound arose upon the air.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

"Heavens! the mills are on fire!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE BURNING MILL.

The awful, despairing cry pealed from Mr. Faulkner's lips. "The mills are on fire!"

It was a fearful thought, and a matter of vital interest not only to the mill-owner, but the hundreds of operatives who on the morrow would be thrown out of employment. The dreadful cry went from lip to lip.

Then Bert White came out of the dreadful spell of horror upon him.

He leaped to the engine-house doors and threw them open.

"Clear the way, everybody," he shouted, in trumpet tones. "Take the line, all! Fall in, and we will save the mills to-night or die!"

Forgotten was all else in that exciting moment.

The young members of Resolute No. 10 were in their suits. But little they recked that. They had time only to don their helmets and coats when, with a rousing cheer, they seized the line, drew the new engine out of cover and were on their way to the fire.

Bert was in the lead with his trumpet. No other company in Fulton could outstrip Resolute No. 10 that night. They were the first at the fire.

Bert saw a red, lurid light against the eastern sky. He took the shortest route to the mill gates. Arrived there they were found locked, but a few blows with the ax opened them.

Bert felt no doubt but that it was an incendiary fire.

How the villains had gained admittance to the mill to set fire to the building was a mystery. Yet such was a fact.

Inwardly Bert had determined to look for the incendiaries if time was afforded him. Upon bursting open the gate the unconscious form of a watchman was found across the path.

There was no time to spare for attending to him just then, so the boys rushed on in the direction of the fire.

Flames were bursting from a window in the basement. Also from the fourth story smoke was pouring out.

There was a fire in the east end of the mill and one in the west. The incendiaries had evidently firmly intended that the property should be destroyed.

Bert led the boys into the basement. A hose-pipe was almost instantly run to the canal and a stream was upon the flames in a ffy. The boys of Resolute No. 10 had the basement fire extinguished before another company arrived.

Wide Awake No. 4, with Bill Houston at the fore, was the next to arrive. But Resolute No. 10 had sent its brave boys into the upper story to combat with the flames there.

Bert led the way with intrepidity. Up the stairs he went, and found the fire in a mass of waste just under a workman's bench. The flames were running along the oiled floor with the rapidity of lightning, and in a few minutes more the place would have been a seething furnace.

A stream of water was instantly brought to bear. Meanwhile the other companies and an immense crowd had arrived.

Desirous of learning exactly what the other fires were in headway, Bert left the boys for a moment and ran swiftly into the east end of the mill.

As he did so he met a huge volume of smoke which nigh drove him back. But pushing through he found the aspect more serious than he had supposed. A chill struck him, as the truth seemed evident that the mill could not be saved.

"It must be saved," he muttered resolutely under his breath. "There is no such word as fail. The incendiaries must be caught, too."

With that brave resolution Bert went on through the smoke, and had reached a spot where the flames had eaten a hole through the floor and were spreading, when it occurred to him to return for his companions, for this seemed a far greater exigency than the one they were combating.

But at that moment a sight caught his gaze that fired his whole being. This was a man's form skulking behind one of the power looms.

In an instant Bert's daring spirit was fired. He was resolved to capture the villainous incendiary. So he made a dash for the unknown skulker.

In a sudden glare of light Bert saw that he wore a mask. This settled all doubt in his mind.

"Halt, you villain!" he cried, in a ringing voice, loud above the roar of the flames. "You are caught!"

But the fellow evidently did not share Bert's opinion. He made a leap over some of the machinery and vanished in the darkness at the upper end of the mill.

Bert was not to be defeated so easily, and was after him like a meteor. It was a swift race between the looms, and the young fireman was only guided by the sound of the incendiary's footsteps.

Suddenly these ceased and Bert was brought to a halt by the termination of the aisle against the brick wall. He made a groping search for his man, but in vain.

He had given him the slip.

No amount of searching resulted in getting a single clue as to his mysterious disappearance. Bert would not abandon the quest at once, however, and spent some time thus.

When it became apparent that farther search was useless, the young fireman made haste to return to the scene of the fire. He was not a little chagrined at his failure to capture the incendiary.

He found the flames rapidly spreading. Something must be done at once.

Dashing to a window, though nearly suffocated with smoke, Bert dashed out glass and sash and shouted to those in the yard below for a ladder and a line of hose.

Luckily, a fire company had just arrived, and a ladder was run up to the window ledge. Then two of the company brought the line of hose up until the nozzle was within Bert's reach.

It was but an instant's work for the boy chief to seize it and turn the water upon the flames. A fearful smoke rolled over him, but Bert held his post.

Single-handed he kept such a stream well directed upon the fire that it was speedily gotten under control. Another line of hose reached the spot, and cheers rang from the lips of the firemen as they realized their success.

Meanwhile, the boys of Resolute No. 10, in the temporary absence of their young chief, had been doing valiant work.

They had extinguished two or three of the fires set in different places and had attacked the only one left. This, however, proved the most stubborn blaze of all.

Bert, with trumpet in hand, directed the carrying of the lines of hose and the cutting away of partitions and the clearing of all obstructions in the way of getting at the flames. The boys of No. 10 proved their mettle now.

The tide had turned and, owing to the strenuous exertions of the fire companies the mills were sure to be saved. It had been a hard battle, but bravely won.

The crowd outside was cheering wildly, and Mr. Faulkner was transported with joy.

He made his way with difficulty to Bert's side in the smoke-clouded weave-room of the mill and, seizing his hand, wrung it vigorously.

"I shall never forget your brave work, my boy," he cried. "But for you my mills would have been surely destroyed."

"I fear you do me too much honor, sir," Bert modestly replied.

"No, I mean every word of it," cried the excited man. "But for you the fire would never have been put out."

This was more than likely, as the boys of Resolute No. 10 had reached the scene long before any other fire company. Indeed, three of the five fires in the building had been subdued by them.

Bert, who had something upon his mind, drew Mr. Faulkner to one side.

"This is an incendiary fire beyond all doubt," he said.

"I believe it," agreed the mill-owner. "But how could those murderous fiends have obtained entrance to the yard? Severance, the watchman, is likely to die from his injuries. I will give five thousand dollars for the arrest and conviction of the villains."

There was no doubt but that Mr. Faulkner was much in earnest. He was not a little surprised when Bert detailed his experience with the man in the mask.

"Heavens!" ejaculated Mr. Faulkner. "What a pity you could not have captured him. It would have been a great point gained."

"I regret it very much," declared Bert. "But villainy is sure to meet its reward sooner or later. We shall in time find out who the villains are."

"I hope so."

"I feel very sure of it," affirmed the young fireman, confidently. "I for one mean to track them down if I can."

"There is no reason why you should not win the reward, Bert."

"I shall try, sir."

"I hope you will succeed. Nobody's property in Fulton will be safe until they are brought to justice. Indeed, I have every reason to believe that there is a villainous plot afoot against the life of my ward, Miss Montrose."

Bert was stunned with the force of this assertion. It seemed so incredible to him that for a moment he could not speak.

"Merciful powers!" he gasped. "Who could be so infamous?"

"I could hardly bring myself to believe it in the first place," continued Mr. Faulkner. "But I have received undoubted evidence of it."

"Have you no clue?"

"None whatever. However, I have detectives at work."

"In what manner was the attempt made?" asked Bert, with a thrill of horror.

"Two attempts have been made," declared Mr. Faulkner. "A shot was fired at her one day while she was out riding in my carriage. Fortunately, the bullet did not wound her, though it cut a hole in her sacque. Not a week ago a corsage bouquet was presented her at a party, in which was confined a deadly poisonous tarantula so concealed so as to certainly bite her when she should apply the flower to her nostrils. What the assassin's purpose is I cannot imagine."

"The monster!" cried Bert, with indignation. "He ought to be lynched. No doubt he is one of the incendiaries."

"Possibly. I have kept a close watch over Eva since then."

Bert's warm blood fairly boiled as he thought the matter over. The more he reflected upon it, the deeper grew his concern for the beautiful young girl whose life he had saved and in whom he felt so peculiar an interest.

"It is a fiend indeed who would conspire against one so pure as she," he muttered. "If harm comes to her I will devote my life to the punishment of that fiend."

The fire was out, and the firemen were all busy rolling up the lines of hose and getting ready to leave for home. It was not far from daylight, though the darkness had not been thicker at any time.

Bert had by chance left the others to explore a distant part

of the mill. As he went on an odor of fire came to his nostrils from that direction. He pushed on hastily and reached an open door leading into an elevator shaft.

As the smoke seemed to come from here, Bert glanced down the shaft. Heavens! sixty feet below fire was raging, and the flames were leaping up the shaft like fiery lances.

As the truth flashed up him that the mysterious incendiaries must yet be at work in the mill, Bert partly turned to summon help.

But as he did so he caught one brief glimpse of a dark form over him, and a masked face, and then he was hurled with fearful force into the burning shaft, to meet a seeming horrible death.

CHAPTER V.

MYSTERIOUS PLOTTING.

Bert's horror was indescribable as he felt himself hurled out into space. The elevator door was slammed shut at the same moment.

It would seem death to fall that distance of sixty feet, but a merciful Providence spared our young hero's life. His natural instinct in falling was to clutch at something, and as luck had it, his hands encountered an iron rod, a part of the framework of the elevator.

The shock was terrific and strained his muscles, but he hung on and swung in mid-air ten feet below the threshold of the door from which he had fallen.

It was a seeming miracle. Not more than three feet from him was the glass door opening into the under story of the mill. With a swing of his feet Bert kicked this in.

Then he made his way, hand over hand, to the groove and slid down it and swung himself into the story beneath.

He paused but one moment to gain breath and murmur a prayer of thanks, and then he started for the other end of the mill with a loud call of alarm.

It was answered almost instantly by the boys of Resolute No. 10.

Bert met them and gave orders for a line of hose to be run into the shaft. He believed this would be sufficient to put out the fire, which was as yet incipient, and then he called the police into the building to make an effectual search for the incendiaries.

Every cranny and nook in the mills was searched. Until long after daylight the quest was kept up, but in vain.

In some mysterious manner the fire fiends had come and gone, leaving no clue behind them.

The fire in the shaft was extinguished by the prompt action of Resolute No. 10. Then that part of the mill not crippled by the fire was occupied by the operatives, the machinery was set in motion and the fire companies went home.

The excitement was over and the people dispersed.

But the affair was the talk of the town, particularly the plucky work of the boys of Resolute No. 10.

It was the first incendiary fire of the long series that had been checked.

This was a great point for the academy boys, and quite naturally they felt much elated. They came in for great praise upon all sides.

But the exciting events of the day were not yet over by any means. The detectives were at work and the incendiaries were at large. Lively events were in store.

Somewhat worn out with the night's hard work, Bert went home and to bed. He slept soundly for several hours, then rising much refreshed, he partook of a hearty meal which his mother prepared for him.

"I shall not go to school to-day, mother," Bert said at the door. "I am now going down to the engine-house."

"Very well, my son," said Mrs. White, with a fond smile. "Be careful of yourself."

Bert made a laughing reply and was in the street the next moment whistling a lively air.

It had been his intention to go to the engine-house, but at a street corner an incident occurred which had the effect of changing his plans.

A man came out of a side street and stood in the shadow of a tobacconist's sign. Bert gave a start as he recognized him. It was Lester Dane.

The thoroughfare was practically deserted, and some impulse impelled Bert to slip into a doorway and watch the villain.

It was evident that he was looking for somebody. Very soon that somebody took shape in the person of a heavily built man

with a lowering cast of features, partly concealed by a slouched hat.

Bert had managed to place the tobacconist's sign between him and the two men, and drawing near to it, he could hear every word said. What he did hear was of the utmost value.

"Hello, Wallace!" exclaimed Dane, in a shrill voice. "Did you want to see me?"

"You bet," was the reply, which was followed by a huge expectoration of tobacco juice. "Where have ye kept yerself?"

"Around town."

"I hain't seen ye fer a month of Sundays. Any new biz?"

"Not just now. We have missed fire once, haven't we?"

"Yas, cuss the luck. But that's all right. Keep shady. Dan Wallace will fetch it out all right. But see here, boss, I've got to have some cash."

"Money?"

"Even so."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Dane, impatiently. "What do you do with all your money, Dan? I'm not overflush myself."

"Well, doggone it, a man can't live on air," growled Wallace. "Nor he can't live long on expectations."

"The expectations must be realized," said Dane, impatiently. "You're a slow workman, Wallace."

"Sh! it ain't so easy to handle this kind of stuff. I don't want to get the red hand and have the perlice know of it. Ugh! I wouldn't like the feeling of rope around my neck."

"Pshaw! You're chicken-hearted. Go in and win, Wallace. It's gold ducats for us. The third time never fails. Ah, here comes Kate."

Dane tipped his hat to a woman just coming down the street. Bert was puzzled as he saw her come up and accost the two villains.

A series of startling thoughts ran through his mind.

What was up? What sort of a dark plot were these men fulminating and what had the woman to do with it? Here was a mystery well worth solving.

Bert saw that Kate Starr, as she was called, was a woman of middle age, and had once been saucily pretty. But the lines of dissipation and the enamel paint so marred her features and complexion, but these marks, coupled with the dash and loud colors of bonnet and dress, proclaimed her to be just what an experienced observer would have judged an actress of the passe broken-down class.

Kate Starr yet played variety parts in a small sideshow. At other times she was boon acquaintance and confidential adviser of Lester Dane. The villain could not have had a more able one, for Kate Starr was a genuine out-and-out deep schemer.

"How d'ye do, Kate?" said Dane, politely. "Glad to see you. Ah, going, Wallace?"

"Yes," growled the ruffian. "I must see you to-night, but where?"

"At Montmorenci's. Will one hundred do?"

"P'raps so."

Wallace slouched out of sight beyond the street corner. Bert held his breath as he listened to the conversation between the man and woman.

"Well, Kate, what luck?" asked Dane, relaxing his urbanity of manner.

"I see my man in half an hour," declared the actress with an attempt at piquancy. "How much money will do my lord this time?"

"Did you hear me just promise Wallace one hundred?"

"I did."

"Well, you ought to hit your man for about half a thousand. Give me two hundred out of it."

"You shall have it, my own," said Kate Starr, affecting tenderness of manner. "Oh, Lester, what a happy day it will be when you pull out that big fortune and we can get married. I shall be Mrs. Lester Dane, and oh! I shall wear diamonds, oh! I shall drive in the park, oh! and—and we will be very devoted, eh, Lester dear?"

"Go easy, Kate," growled Dane. "Don't come no taffy business over me."

The actress broke into a thrilling laugh.

"Well, my lord is very downcast about something," she said, mock seriously. "What lies heavy on your mind?"

"Oh, I don't know," growled Dane, savagely. "There's no luck for me, Kate. Things do go so confoundedly slow. Wallace don't get in his work at all, and every time we make a strike we fail."

"Luck will turn," declared Kate Starr, confidently. "Be sure of that, Lester. Of course, I would like to see things work a little quicker. I don't like this blackmailing business. It is

apt to turn tables on me any time. I have bled my man deeply now."

"Wallace must get in his work," growled Dane. "Well, Kate, meet me to-night at Montmorenci's saloon. Have the money sure. I am obliged to be off."

"I see my man very soon," replied the actress. "Bon jour, my own!"

She laughed in a thrilling manner. Dane lifted his hat and then vanished in the same direction that Wallace had taken.

Kate Starr went in the opposite way, and so near to Bert that he could have touched her. But luckily she was so buried in thought that she did not see him.

The boy fireman watched her form recede down the street, and then acting upon all impulse, he followed her.

For some distance she kept on at a leisurely walk, and then Bert saw a man on the opposite side of the street bow to her and cross over to meet her.

Fortune again favored the young fireman, and he was enabled to draw near enough in the shadow of a doorway to hear every word of the conversation.

"Well, Mr. Valentine Dessaint, we meet again," said Kate Starr, in a jocose manner. "You see I am your evil spirit."

"That is well quoted," said the man, with a groan.

Bert saw that he was a tall man with a form attenuated by disease, and features shrunken and pallid with care. There was a certain noble, haughty mien to his manner which showed the elements of a gentleman. But it was evident that he was under a cloud. His eyes had a restless, hunted gleam. Bert White was instantly interested in him.

"You got my note?" resumed Kate Starr, tersely.

"I did," replied Valentine Dessaint. "I am here in answer to it."

"Well, my demands are moderate."

"Why should you have any demands upon me at all?" asked the sick man. "Not six months ago I gave you one thousand dollars."

"Oh, well, how long do you expect such a paltry sum to last me?"

"Yes, but you said that you would never trouble me again."

"Did I?" said the actress carelessly. "Well, you see circumstances over which I have no control——"

"Enough! There is not a spark of honor in your composition," declared Valentine Dessaint forcibly. "Your word goes for naught. I am simply unfortunate in being in the power of such a traitorous woman."

"Well said!" cried Kate Starr, with an unfeeling laugh. "You are truly in my power. Listen. You dare not refuse my demands, no matter what they are."

"What are your demands to-day?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"I am tempted to deny you."

"Deny me, and all the world shall know on the morrow that you are a murderer, and the gallows will be your portion. You dare not deny me."

"Oh, why am I so deeply cursed? It is not the money I care for, nor for life. I would willingly die were it not for my mission, which I must fulfill. Money! It is the curse of human kind when coupled with the baser passions of covetousness."

"We have no time for sermons!" cried Kate Starr shrilly. "Pass over the money."

Without a word Valentine Dessaint drew a roll of bills from his pocket and gave it to the scheming woman. Then he turned wearily and walked away.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. FAULKNER HAS AN UNDERSTANDING WITH CLYDE.

Bert White had remained more than ordinarily interested in this strange scene. Of course, he could see that Kate Starr was levying a species of blackmail upon this unfortunate man who was in her power. But how had Dessaint fallen into her power? Was he indeed a murderer?

Again, what sort of a plot was afoot between Lester Dane and Dan Wallace?

Bert was a little confused with an attempt at studying out this mystery. But he was wholly decided to not rest until he had reached the bottom of the matter.

If anybody was being wronged, or there was villainy afoot, he felt it his sacred duty to ferret the matter out and see that justice was done.

He did not follow Kate Starr farther. He walked in the direction of the engine-house now.

But before he reached it he gave a great start at sight of Lester Dane upon the opposite side of the street.

Bert was half tempted to shadow the villain some more, but a series of incidents prevented.

Down the street, with prancing pace, came a pair of blacks attached to a brougham. In the vehicle were seated Mr. Faulkner and Clyde.

Dane looked up, and at sight of Clyde a devilish light shone in his eyes. He made a quick, impatient gesture to the young fop who dared not disregard it, and at once leaped out of the carriage, leaving his father unceremoniously. Mr. Faulkner turned, and with evident displeasure stared at Dane.

"Just the man I have been wanting to see," cried Dane, ironically, as Clyde came up. "Left the old man a little sudden, eh?"

"Confound it, man, you made me," said Clyde, deprecatingly. "The governor will be in a huff at me now."

"Oh, dash your governor," said Dane, rudely. "I've got some important business with you. Come on."

The pair turned into a side street. The carriage went on, but suddenly came to a halt.

Bert saw Mr. Faulkner, and the impulse at once seized him to speak with the mill-owner. Accordingly he made a motion to him.

At once Mr. Faulkner commanded the driver to pull up the horses.

"Get in, Bert," he said, kindly. "I am very glad to see you. I am glad to have a companion in my ride, for Clyde suddenly left me just now."

"Yes, sir, I saw that," replied Bert.

"Rather unceremonious, I think. I do not like the idea of him associating with Lester Dane. Do you know him, Bert?"

"Only by sight," replied the young fireman. "And to tell you the truth, Mr. Faulkner, it would be well for Clyde to have nothing whatever to do with him."

"So I believe," cried Mr. Faulkner with conviction. "I will speak to Clyde about that at once. Well, sir, what can I do for you?" seeing an earnest light in Bert's eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Faulkner, I want to tell you a very strange thing," cried Bert, eagerly. "It is all a great mystery to me."

And with this Bert detailed the conversation he had overheard between Dane and Wallace, and Kate Starr and Dessaint. Mr. Faulkner listened with wonderment.

"My soul!" he exclaimed excitedly. "There is villainy afoot somewhere. That Lester Dane is a scoundrel, I feel sure. And to think that Clyde associates with him! It shall be stopped."

"I thought you could tell me, Mr. Faulkner, what ought to be done in the matter," said Bert.

"Well," said the mill-owner reflectively. "That is pretty hard to tell. I hardly know what to say. It is pretty certain that a crime of some sort is meditated. It is indeed a great mystery, Bert. Come to the house and we will talk it over."

Mr. Faulkner gave the driver orders and they were driven to his fine mansion.

They went directly into the library, and there held quite a lengthy discussion without any definite conclusion being reached.

Mr. Faulkner had half decided to give the matter to the detectives, but on second thought he changed his mind.

"I have a better idea, Bert," he said. "Find this man Dessaint. Bring him here and we will talk with him. Perhaps he can enlighten us."

"I will do it," cried Bert, eagerly. "At the first opportunity it shall be done, Mr. Faulkner."

"Very well," replied the mill magnate in a relieved manner. "I shall await the result with some anxiety."

Bert had risen to take his leave, when a slender form glided over the threshold. Eva Montrose, pale and beautiful, stood before them.

She greeted Bert warmly, and the young fireman's pulse quickened. Then she turned to Mr. Faulkner.

"I would like your help, guardian," she said sweetly. "Somebody, I feel sure, has sent me a present, but I cannot open the box."

As she spoke she placed a small wooden box on the desk. It was a foot square and seemed to be tightly nailed together.

"Indeed," said Mr. Faulkner lightly. "We will see what we can do."

He advanced to a shelf and took down a strong chisel. Inserting this under the lid, he brought a pressure to bear. The result was terrific and startling.

There was a sudden blinding light, a heavy detonation, a

shock, and not a piece of the box remained in Mr. Faulkner's hands. In some mysterious manner it had exploded.

The infernal machine, for such it certainly was, had not performed its work well.

By a seeming miracle they had escaped injury from the flying fragments. Vases on the mantel were shattered, the window glass blown out, and even the carpet was blackened and soiled. Singularly enough, this was all the damage done.

For a moment nobody could speak, so great was the amazement and consternation of all. Then Eva found her voice.

"Why, Mr. Faulkner," she exclaimed in distressed tones, "that was meant for me."

"Meant for you," agreed the mill-owner, in a hard voice, "but by the best of luck injured nobody. I would give half my fortune to know the name of the fiend who sent that machine here."

"Whoever he is, he must be a disciple of Satan," exclaimed Bert. "No punishment could be too great for him."

Eva had sunk into a chair and fainted, and Mr. Faulkner rang for cordial. A glass of the liquid soon revived her, and she retired to her own chamber, giving Bert a farewell glance which thrilled him.

Mr. Faulkner was much stirred up by the affair, and took instant and active measures to get a clue as to the perpetrator.

The servants were questioned, the house searched, word dispatched to police headquarters and detectives summoned.

But all in vain.

Meanwhile Bert had taken his leave. He went at once to the engine-house.

Left alone in the library, Mr. Faulkner, in a disturbed state of mind, paced the floor until long after the supper hour.

When the door suddenly opened, and Clyde entered the room, the contingency for which he was waiting seemed at hand.

"Ah, my son," he said in a constrained voice, "you have come at last. I have been waiting for you."

Clyde Faulkner affected surprise.

"Waiting for me!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

Mr. Faulkner advanced and gazed straight into his son's eyes.

"My boy," he said in a tremulous voice, "do you know the real character of Lester Dane?"

Clyde counterfeited careless concern, but did not meet his father's gaze.

"Why, he is one of the men about town," he said, "and not a bad fellow, I think."

"Do you know that he is not a bad fellow?"

"I think I do."

"Clyde," said the father, almost sternly, "stop and think. You are my son, the only one whom I can love in the wide world. I have set my life by you, and if the knowledge came to my ears that you had been influenced to depart from the paths of virtue by such a man as that, it would verily break my heart."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Clyde, testily. "Somebody has been misstating facts to you, and I'll wager that it was that young upstart of a schoolboy, Bert White. I'd cane him if I knew it."

Mr. Faulkner's eyes blazed.

"No, you will not," he said sternly. "Bert White is an honorable young man. What I know I have seen with my own eyes."

"You have seen nothing," snapped Clyde.

"I have seen enough to warrant me in forbidding you to associate with that villain Lester Dane."

"Then you deny me personal liberty?"

"That is no interference with your personal liberty, sir. Understand that I am in earnest. If you cannot see the precipice at your feet, I must snatch you from it. It is my duty. That is all."

Mr. Faulkner turned away, and Clyde stood a moment with clenched hands and distorted face. Then he turned and left the house.

The shades of evening were fast falling as he walked down the street at a rapid pace.

There was almost a murderous resolution in the young fop's breast, and his right hand was upon a pistol butt in his inner pocket. As chance had it, Bert White was just coming out of the engine-house and met Clyde face to face.

"Look here, you contemptible puppy," he cried madly, facing Bert and aiming the revolver at him. "Take back what you told my father about me or I'll shoot you."

Bert, cool and resolute, understood the young villain's meaning. He did not flinch, but eyeing Clyde fearlessly, replied:

"I told your father nothing about you. I did tell him the

character of Lester Dane. You made the rest plain to him yourself.

"You lie," gritted Clyde angrily.

This was too much for Bert. He dashed the weapon from the young villain's grasp and, seizing him by the shoulders, flung him from the sidewalk.

Then he picked up the revolver and dropped it into a sewer grating. Faulkner was upon his feet and rushed madly at Bert again. The young fireman did not wish to hurt him, so he seized him by the shoulders and held him against the engine-house wall.

"Don't be a fool, Clyde Faulkner," he said, coolly.

Faulkner struggled, but in vain. Bert would have read him a lecture then and there, but at that moment a thrilling sound smote upon the air. It was the fire bells.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

CHAPTER VII.

A DARING RESCUE.

"Fire! Fire!"

The cry mingled with the clangor of the bells, and Bert White forgot all else in his ardent desire to be first on the scene. Forgetting his feud with Faulkner, he hurled the young villain aside and sprang into the engine-house.

"Fire! Fire!"

Over the academy fences the boys of No. 10 were coming pell-mell. The long ropes were run out, and a great cheer went up, as giving way, they whirled the machine out into the street.

Then began the mad run to the fire. Bert White saw the light against the evening sky and at once divined its location.

In the eastern part of the town were tenement blocks occupied by a legion of families. Nothing could be more dangerous than a fire of this kind to human life.

On went the boys of Resolute No. 10. The fire bells had aroused the whole city, and the streets were instantly filled with people.

Everything made way for the fire engine as it went down through the streets at mad speed. Bert in the lead, with almost intuition, took the nearest way to the fire.

Now they were upon the scene. One of the large tenements was on fire.

In a number of the windows women and children were frantically calling for rescue. The flames had consumed the stairways and they were unable to descend.

Penned up in this fearful shell of a building, in fact a literal fire-trap, the outlook for saving them was not good.

In almost every instance of the burning of a tenement block one or more of the inmates are burned alive. Once under way, it is almost impossible to check a fire in such a structure.

Bert knew this as well as anybody and realized that the inmates must have immediate succor.

He gave one quick glance down the street to see if the hook and ladder were coming. But they were not in sight.

Resolute No. 10 was by far the first company on the spot.

A stream was gotten upon the fire with some effect. Step by step, inch by inch, the boys fought the flames.

They had succeeded in keeping them confined to one end of the building when other companies began to arrive.

Among them was the hook and ladder truck, and Bert at once gave his attention to the saving of human life. Leaving Resolute No. 10 in charge of Joe Hawes, Bert assisted in the placing of the ladders.

To reach the topmost story, where the unfortunate people were, required the splicing of several ladders. Now a volunteer was wanted to ascend and bring down the women and children.

Stout men quailed before the risky undertaking, and for a moment the chief called in vain for a volunteer. The light ladders swayed and trembled, and there was no surety that they would withstand the weight upon them.

"Come, men," called the chief angrily, "where is your pluck? Shall I be the first to go up?"

"No!" cried Bert White bravely, as he sprang forward. "Steady all, and I will save those children or die."

A great cheer went up from the crowd. The hook and ladder men who had hesitated felt somewhat abashed. But Bert was already on the ladder.

Up he went, like a squirrel for agility. To be sure the ladder swayed and rocked frightfully, but Bert gave no thought to this.

A glance upward revealed to him the white, agonized faces of the helpless little ones, and this was enough. He knew no fear after that.

Up he went until he had reached the top. Then, with two of the children in his arms, he slid down the ladder in safety. A wild cheer went up.

A dozen trips Bert made up and down the ladder, bringing down women and children in safety. It seemed as if all had been taken out of the burned building, and there was a move to take down the ladder, when a wild cry went up from the crowd.

There was a mighty upward burst of flames and smoke, and it could be seen that the interior of the building had collapsed. Only the tottering walls were left, and flames were coursing over these with lightning-like rapidity.

But this was not altogether the cause of the crowd's excitement. When the smoke cleared and all could see every man's heart stood still with horror.

There, perched upon the cornice of the doomed building at a dizzy height from the street, while the flames seemed already licking his lower limbs, was the figure of a man.

"Heaven help him!" was the general gasping cry. "He is lost."

Bert White gave one glance at the apparently doomed man, and then seized hold of the ladder.

"Up with the ladder!" he cried in a ringing voice. "Hoist away, all!"

Chief Houston put a hand upon Bert's arm in remonstrance.

"You are mad!" he exclaimed, with blanched lips. "It is death!"

"Never!" cried Bert, with determination. "That man must be saved."

The young fireman was in earnest and, motioning to his own boys of Resolute No. 10, the special ladder was run up. But to the horror of all, it did not reach the cornice. Fully ten feet intervened.

Flames played in and out with lance-like tongues through the topmost rungs of the ladder. Bert did not heed this.

He threw a stout rope about his shoulders, which he got in the bunker of Engine No. 10. Then he went up the ladder like a monkey.

Now a great cloud of smoke enveloped his form and he was lost from sight. The spliced ladder rocked and swayed frightfully.

Before he reached the top he found rungs which had been eaten by the flames and crumbled beneath his feet. But he knew that he would not need these in the descent. His prime object was to gain the top.

Up he went and the breeze blew the drifting smoke away, and those below saw him on the topmost rung of the ladder.

Heavens! what a fall that would be if the ladder should crumble now! What a horrible death if the building should fall!

It could be seen that ten feet below Bert's position the ladder was in flames. Truly this boy fireman had undertaken the most daring feat ever placed on record.

But Bert's nerves were steel. He worked coolly, calmly and with resolution.

Arrived at the top, he found that the distance to the position of the imperiled man was fully ten feet. There the unfortunate man crouched, with awful, ghastly white face.

And in that instant Bert was given a strange surprise. The features of the man were familiar to him. In that moment he recognized Valentine Dessaint, the man upon whom Kate Starr had such a mysterious hold.

But there was no time to lose in idle speculation. Every moment was fraught with vital importance, and Bert did not hesitate an instant.

"You have come to save me," the man cried loudly above the roar of the flames, "but I fear you have thrown your life away."

"No," replied Bert. "We must not give up. You cannot climb down from where you are?"

"No."

"Take the end of this rope, then, and securely fasten it to the cornice."

Bert threw it to him. Dessaint did as he was instructed.

The rope was made of a fireproof material of Bert's own invention, being wound with very fine wire, and no ordinary amount of heat would affect it.

Bert dropped the other end to the ground. Then Dessaint dropped over the edge of the cornice and slid down to the topmost rung of the ladder, Bert having given way for him.

It looked like a wonderful rescue, but at that moment there was a terrific roar from the flames, a mighty crash, and the fragments of the shattered ladder fell to the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

BERT PLAYS DETECTIVE.

An awful groan of horror went up from the crowd as they saw the ladder falling.

The ladder had given way, but fortunately the fireproof rope had held, and Bert and Dessaint were coming down hand-over-hand to the ground.

Down they went through flame and smoke. Both were scorched and smoke-begrimed, but not seriously burned. In a few moments they emerged from the burning debris below, and staggered out into the crowd, to be supported by sympathetic friends, and taken to the rear, where a skilled doctor dressed their injuries.

Three minutes later the cornice upon which Dessaint had been perched fell into the ruins.

It was a narrow escape and a daring rescue. From that hour Bert White's fame was assured.

Tender hands bathed the wounds sustained by the young fireman, and a cheering crowd followed the carriage in which he was conveyed home. He was the hero of the hour.

The next day Bert was himself again. To be sure he had suffered a few burns, which were bandaged, but these he little heeded.

He was much gratified by receiving a note of inquiry and a beautiful bouquet of choice flowers from Mr. Faulkner and Eva Montrose. More than this, the mysterious Valentine Dessaint sent a letter of thanks for the great favor and inclosed a cashier's check for five hundred dollars.

"You must accept this money," the letter ran. "I am a man of wealth, and my life is worth far more to me than all the money I have. This is but a slight return for the service done me, and you will confer a great honor upon me by accepting the same without demur."

VALENTINE DESSAINT.

At first Bert had been inclined to refuse the money, but after reading the letter he decided to accept it.

Mrs. White had been left but a scanty income by her husband, and even so small a sum contributed materially to their welfare.

"Just wait till I leave school, mother," said Bert, proudly. "I shall make lots of money, for I am going into business."

"I hope you will prosper, my son," said the mother fondly. "Be always upright and you will succeed."

Long years after Bert recalled this advice of his mother, and it was of great value to him.

Upon this very morning succeeding the tenement house fire, Bert chanced to pick up the morning daily, and almost the first thing his gaze rested upon was the following:

\$5,000 REWARD!

"Take Notice.—I will pay the above reward to any person who will secure the arrest and conviction of the miscreants who set the mills on fire on Thursday night.

"JOHN FAULKNER."

Bert sprang up and paced the floor in a state of great excitement. Finally he paused and said earnestly:

"Mother, I am going to do it."

"Do what, my son?" asked Mrs. White, in wonderment.

"I am going to track down those incendiaries. Besides winning the reward, I shall confer a great blessing upon the community. I will attempt it."

"My son," began Mrs. White, in remonstrance, "I fear——"

"Not a word, mother. I am in earnest. I am going to turn detective."

Bert was not the one to easily be swerved when his mind was once made up. A short while later he had left the house and was making his way toward the engine-house.

His injuries were not such as to interfere with this action. He was welcomed by a number of the youthful members of Resolute No. 10 most warmly.

"Glad to see you out, Bert," cried Gus Kircher. "You are a real hero."

"We are proud of our young chief," cried Joe Hawes.

All this was very pleasant to Bert, but he was quite uncom-

fortable under such a fire of compliments. He was glad to withdraw with Will Evans, and together they walked down the street.

"Do you know, Bert, there are several New York detectives up here to catch the incendiaries," declared Will Evans. "They are attracted by the big reward offered."

Bert felt his pulse quicken.

"Have you any idea that they will succeed?" he asked casually.

"I believe that they have a clue."

"Ah! What is it?"

"I don't know. I believe they got it from a woman who claims to know it all. She says one man does the business."

Bert's pulse beat furiously.

"Do you know what that woman's name is?" he asked.

"Yes; at least I think they said she was an actress and her name was Starr."

"Kate Starr!" gasped Bert.

"Do you know her?"

"Well, I have heard of her," replied Bert evasively. "Her word is hardly to be relied upon."

"Indeed!"

"It is a fact. Well, I must leave you here, Will. I will see you later."

"All right, Bert."

The young fireman crossed the street with rapid strides. He had dismissed his friend rather summarily and was actuated by somewhat warrantable circumstances.

As they were walking leisurely along, he chanced to see Clyde Faulkner emerge from a saloon. Lester Dane was at his elbow. Together they went down a side street.

Bert was determined to follow them.

Will Evans had been somewhat mystified by his friend's action and his curiosity was aroused. He stood a moment gazing after Bert.

"What on earth has come over him?" he muttered. "That is rather queer. As I live, I believe he intends to follow those two men, Faulkner and Dane!"

Evans paused a moment irresolute, then he started to follow Bert. His curiosity had mastered him.

The direction taken by the villains was toward the mills. It was now nearly time for them to shut down.

But they avoided the mill gate, and made a circuit of the canal, crossing the open green to the lumber yard. Beyond this was the flume where the water was drawn out of the canal once a week—that is, every Saturday night.

It was an unfrequented locality, and Bert instantly guessed the truth, that the villains meant to hold an appointment here with others.

That he was right was very soon proved. In an obscure part of the yard the villains came to a halt.

Their position was just in the shadow of a toppling pile of staves. Behind this Bert crept. Fortune seemed to aid him in his detective operations.

He could hear every word spoken and took good care to store it away in his mind for future use.

"It's about time Kate was here," muttered Dane, apprehensively. "I hope nothing has happened to spoil the game."

"I almost wish I was out of it, don't you know," said Faulkner simperingly.

"Pshaw! don't be a fool, Clyde. It's time you became a man. Your governor would make a baby of you. So he has kicked on your farther associating with me!"

"Yes," replied Clyde. "Dang that young fireman! He was the one to post him."

Dane's brow darkened.

"That young White is making himself too fresh," he gritted. "If he don't take care he will be brought up with a short turn yet."

"He's done you one favor, though."

"What?"

"He pulled Dessaint out of the flames. That's the goose that lays your golden egg, don't you know?"

"That Dessaint is a fool," chuckled Dane. "Kate just pulls him around by the nose in fine shape. But he's got the boodle. I've been trying to get Kate to marry him to square accounts and come in for his wealth. But she's stuck on me, you know. Ah, here she is now."

CHAPTER IX.

CLYDE FAULKNER PROVES HIS METTLE

Even as Dane spoke a woman came into view, and it did not require a closer view for Bert to recognize her as Kate Starr.

The young fireman's heart thrilled. He felt that he was upon the verge of most important disclosures.

She came up quickly, welcoming the two men with a bow and a smile. Dane and Faulkner lifted their hats gallantly.

"Ah, gentlemen, we meet again, said the actress, with a stage gesture. "This time it is to do some dark plotting."

"Sh! don't talk so loud, Kate," admonished Dane.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Faulkner. "We are safe enough here."

"It is just the place for us," agreed Kate, as she glanced about. "There is not a listening ear can carry our tale abroad, friends. But to business."

"Aye, to business," declared Dane.

"Dessaint, poor old fool, was saved by that young fireman, Bert White?"

"Yes."

"Bert did us a good turn most unintentionally then."

"You are right."

"It would have ended our most profitable pull on the old fool if he had shuffled off just then. But enough of that. The idea is just this. A certain party is in your way, Lester. That party has successfully escaped all our efforts thus far to be put out of the way. You see, I am not calling names."

"Yes, yes!" agreed the two men.

Bert experienced a sudden thrill as a suspicion crossed his mind. Might not this "party" alluded to be Eva Montrose? Heavens! were these the plotting assassins who had so repeatedly failed in their efforts to take her young life?

It almost caused the young fireman's blood to curdle in his veins. But he listened intently to what followed.

"Now, you have worked alone in this matter," continued Kate Starr calmly. "You have been seriously handicapped. There is another member of our party who is in a better position to do the job than either of us. He could not fail. I mean Mr. Clyde Faulkner."

At this the fop turned deadly pale and put up his hands deprecatingly.

"No, no!" he cried. "I couldn't do it, don't you know. Really I couldn't."

The actress and Dane exchanged glances and laughed coarsely.

"Well, you are indeed a chicken," said Dane, sneeringly. "You'll never make a man, Clyde Faulkner. Why don't you brace up?"

"But that would be murder," replied Faulkner, with a shiver. "I could hang for it."

"Pshaw! You haven't got sense!" exclaimed Dane, impatiently. "This girl is under the same roof with you. There ain't any use in mincing matters. It would be no trick at all for you to put a little mixture in the girl's food or drink. It would settle the matter at once without any farther trouble."

Bert White, in his concealment, could hardly restrain himself from rushing forth and denouncing the schemers. He now knew for a fact that they were the would-be assassins of Eva Montrose.

But a desire to note the action taken by Clyde Faulkner restrained him. He secretly wondered if the villain would in this case suffer himself to be made a tool of by the schemers.

Clyde Faulkner was silent a moment. It required some little time for him to get the matter clearly through his dull brain.

Clyde was not altogether evil or malicious. He was prone to dissipated habits and was somewhat devoid of honor, yet he was not an underhanded, scheming villain like Lester Dane.

So he drew himself up and there was an odd reserve in his manner as he replied:

"I can see what you want me to do. I'll own I'm not the most upright young man in the world, but I could never commit murder, don't you know. More than that, I shall feel it my duty to warn my father's ward and prevent harm coming to her if I can."

Had the earth opened at his feet, Lester Dane could not have been more amazed. He paused in an involuntary spring forward, and his face was purple with wrath, dismay and surprise.

He could hardly believe his senses.

"What!" he gasped. "You, Clyde Faulkner, going back on us now? By the gods! it won't do for you."

Bert White was not a little elated at the stand which Faulkner had taken. Indeed, he conceived a new and increasing respect for the fop, who was not wholly bad after all.

"Back, Lester Dane!" cried Faulkner, who seemed suddenly transformed. "Don't you put a hand on me. You've made a fool of me long enough. My eyes are opened. I have shouldered disgrace for you, but at a crime like murder I draw the line."

"Fool!" gritted the baffled villain. "I am sorry now that I made a confidant of you. I believe you are a traitor."

"That is all right," said Faulkner, changing his manner and nonchalantly lighting a cigar. "But you'll have to strike a new lead, Lester. I'm with you in cards or anything of that sort, but no killing jobs for me, oh, no."

Dane was furious. His inclination was strong to pounce upon the top and force him to the task which he had allotted to him, but cool common sense came to his aid.

He reflected that force was futile and the easiest way was the best. So in a whimpering way he said:

"Now, look here, Clyde, this is a mean trick. We've got our plans all laid and you upset them. Is that right?"

"Perhaps not," said Clyde, carelessly.

"Of course it isn't. Now talk sense. It's only a little thing—"

"Enough!" said Faulkner, with more of spirit than any there had ever seen him assume before. "I told you once, Lester, that I would not do it."

"That settles it," said Dane, in a steely voice. "I'll not forget this in you, Clyde. We will not discuss the matter farther. Kate and I have got a little business to talk over. I'll see you at Davidson's saloon later."

"All right," said Clyde, indifferently, as he turned away and leisurely sauntered towards the town. He kept straight on, not looking back, and was soon out of sight.

"Drat the luck," gritted Dane, as Clyde vanished. "Did you ever seen the beat of that, Kate? I was sure of that young fool. He has kicked over the traces, and now if we win we will have another to work against."

There was an indescribable light in Kate Starr's eyes. She tapped the ground a moment with her daintily shod foot.

"There is no trusting anybody," she said in a constrained voice. "There is one thing we can do if he bothers us."

"What?"

"Shut off his breath."

Dane shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he agreed. "That is true, and it shall be done if he turns traitor to us. We must win this game, Kate. Ah, the deuce! What is that?"

Dane gave a quick backward leap and even Kate recoiled. An unfortunate thing had happened.

Bert had leaned too heavily against the pile of staves and they had suddenly toppled and fallen. He was unable to retreat in time and stood revealed.

"Bert White!" yelled the discomfited Dane. "Playing eaves-dropper, eh?"

"Yes, Lester Dane," cried Bert, as he sprang fearlessly over the pile of staves, "and I am well aware of your murderous plans. But they will never succeed, for I mean to thwart them."

"You!" gritted Dane.

"Yes."

"You have heard all?"

"I have."

"Then you know too much," cried the villain, with insane fury. "You must die!"

"And you shall rest behind prison bars!" cried Bert.

He did not retreat as the villain rushed upon him. Indeed, he had sought the encounter, and felt confident that he could worst Dane.

They closed and a terrific struggle followed. Bert would no doubt have mastered his man, but at a favorable moment the woman, Kate Starr, dealt him a tremendous blow on the head from behind.

This for a moment weakened Bert, and Dane, with a jeering laugh, hurled him away from him. As chance had it, this was toward the edge of the flume, and Bert was unable to recover himself. Like a flash, he went over the edge just as the flood-gates were opened, and a mighty volume of water rushed in from the canal.

CHAPTER X.

THE INCENDIARIES.

The canal gates had been opened just at that moment and Bert White went down beneath the swirling mass of waters.

Dane and the woman, Kate Starr, stood for a moment petrified with the force of a fearful conviction.

"He's done for," gasped Dane. "That is the end of him, Kate."

"He will never get out of there," declared the woman in a hushed voice.

They gazed at each other with staring eyes. Then Kate Starr looked about hurriedly.

"Well, it's done and he's out of the way," she muttered. "We are safe enough, Lester. Nobody has seen it. But we must get out of here at once."

Dane needed no urging. Together they hastened to leave the spot.

Soon they were upon the street, and at a corner came to a halt.

"Well, Kate, it isn't policy to be seen together too much, I suppose," declared Dane.

"No," agreed Kate Starr readily. "But what are our plans now, Lester?"

"I hardly know," said the villain darkly. "I don't suppose we can do anything with that Clyde Faulkner."

"I fear not."

"Yet it must be done. Once that girl is out of the way, I am heir to that fortune. It must be done."

The actress' eyes glittered like stars. She drew nearer, and lowering her voice, said:

"I have a plan."

"The deuce!" ejaculated Dane. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"I wanted to make sure that we could not work the game in any other way."

"Ah! I see."

"It's a risky plan and might fail. I believe I could work it, though."

"What is it?"

"You know that Eva Montrose is a patron of charity. Not a day passes that she does not contribute to the comfort of some poor wretch whom poverty has overtaken."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Dane, sneeringly. "A real Christian and female philanthropist."

"Exactly. Now I propose to get a grip on her through that medium. But the breezes have wings to carry our secrets abroad. Bend your ear till I give you the whole scheme."

Dane bent down, and the scheming woman communicated her plans in a whisper. They seemed to strike the villain favorably, for he clapped his hands enthusiastically.

"Good enough, Kate!" he cried. "That is a great plot. You are just the one to do it."

"I want your help."

"Of course."

"Then it's settled?"

"Yes."

"When I send for you, come."

"I will."

With this they parted, Kate Starr going her way and Dane turning into Montmorenci's saloon near by, which was in fact a secret gaming house.

As he entered he was given a start of surprise, for whom should he meet face to face but Dan Wallace?

"Wallace!" exclaimed the villain. "Just the man I want to see."

"The same," exclaimed the ruffian. "We've been looking for you. All the boys are here."

"Indeed!"

Dane looked about the crowded bar-room and picked out with his eye three familiar forms, men of Wallace's type.

"We are running a big risk in coming here," declared Wallace. "I think we are shadowed. There's two detectives out to the door now."

Dane felt a chill of apprehension. But he shook it off with a shrug of the shoulders and continued:

"They can't prove anything on us, Dan. Come, let's take this table and talk over matters."

Wallace turned and beckoned to his three companions. They approached, three as likely jailbirds as one would care to see.

"Hello, Jim Warren," exclaimed Dane, familiarly. "How are you, Joe Benton and Sike Wemyss. Haven't seen you since the mill fire."

The three incendiaries, for such they were, as the reader has doubtless guessed, muttered a reply and sat down to the table. Then Wallace opened the discussion.

"We've done a good bizness in this town," he declared gruffly. "The only poor trip we've had was that little blaze at the mills. While I was working the fire with Joe, Sike and Jim tried the big safe. But that condemned boy fire company got there so quickly that we had to skip."

"You mean the Resolute No. 10?"

"Yes."

"Well, their chief, that young Bert White, won't trouble us any more," said Dane.

"Why?"

"Never mind. He's over the river by this time. No whys nor wherefores, but he has gone."

"Well, that's a good job," growled one of the incendiary trio. "But we've about come to ther conclusion, boss, that this town is worked out."

"How so?" asked Dane.

"The air is getting too hot for us here now," replied Jim Warren. "There's half a hundred detectives on our heels. More than that, we've worked every big safe, and every likely place for plunder."

Dane was reflective a moment.

"Well, we will make a change of base very soon, boys. But there's one more job I want your help on before you go."

The villains looked expectant.

"What is it, boss?"

"It's a little job Kate Starr and I have made up."

With this Dane in a whisper communicated to the incendiaries the plan detailed to him by the scheming actress. The men listened respectfully and for a moment there was silence. Then Jim Warren said:

"In course we can't refuse to help ye, boss, but it must be ther last job. Ye'll give us yer word on that?"

"Yes," agreed Dane, "I will. You can then light out of Fulton and I'll join you in some other town."

"There's one very urgent reason why I want to leave this town," declared Wallace, uneasily.

"Why?" asked Dane.

"There's a certain party here who is on my heels day and night. I had an old score with him eighteen years ago."

"Who is he?" asked Dane, curiously.

"Do yer remember ther man what was rescued from that tenement house roof by that young fireman?"

"Oh, Valentine Dessaint!"

"That's what he calls hisself," declared Wallace. "Well, him and I has an old score to settle. I set that house on fire fer the purpose of burnin' him up in it. But that cussed boy fireman reskied him."

"Thunder!" ejaculated Dane. "Why should you fear him? He stands more in fear of law than you do."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Wallace, shrugging his shoulders. "Don't be so sure. I killed my man onct, and the blame fell on him. He was sentenced to be hanged an' escaped. Since then he has done nothin' but foller me all over the kentry, and I expect he's got some sort of a grip now whereby he can turn the blame back onto me and clear hisself. I'd rather keep out of his way."

"Then he is not guilty?" asked Dane, in a subdued tone.

"No."

"Great Scott! That is the man Kate Starr has her grip on."

An amazed light shone in Wallace's eyes. He sprang up excitedly.

"Do tell!" he exclaimed wildly. "Does Kate know him? Well, then——"

He did not finish the sentence. Jim Warren arose with a warning cry. A startling thing had occurred.

At that moment the outer door of the saloon opened and two men in citizen's dress entered, followed by half a dozen blue-coated officers.

The two men were detectives, and were coming with the posse to make an arrest of the incendiary gang.

CHAPTER XI.

DESSAINT IN PERIL.

It was true that the detectives had at last spotted the gang of fire fiends. It was a thrilling situation, as the officers entered the saloon to arrest the ruffians.

With Jim Warren's warning cry, every man was upon his feet.

Lester Dane's face turned livid, for he saw that from that moment he was also a hunted man. His presence with them at that moment proved his complicity.

Dan Wallace was too old a villain to lose his head in an exigency like this.

He was quick to act.

"Separate, boys!" he yelled. "Make a break for the rear!"

"Surrender!" shouted the detective in the lead. "The jig is up, you rogues."

But the fire gang had no idea of giving up without a struggle. Each man drew a pistol.

Crack! Crack!

One of the officers fell. Then shots were exchanged, and the incendiaries made a break for the rear of the saloon.

The detectives had committed a glaring fault in not having guarded the rear entrance.

As a result, Wallace gained the rear room, with Dane close at his heels.

A kick took the area door from its hinges, and all of the incendiaries scattered into the alley and thence into various streets. The police followed hotly, but they were too late.

Wallace and his gang had eluded them. It was a daring stroke.

Dane and Wallace kept together and came to a halt finally in an unfrequented street where they felt safe from pursuit.

Both were exhausted, and sat down upon stone steps before a large brick house with a high stoop. Upon the door was a sign:

"Board and Rooms."

"Whew!" exclaimed Wallace, as he mopped the perspiration from his brow. "That was a hard run, Lester."

"A close pinch, I call it," replied Dane. "We had no time to spare."

"You are right."

"Do you suppose any of the others will be caught?"

"It's not likely."

"I am in a hard box now."

"How so?"

"Why, I shall hardly dare show myself in this town again. I am spotted. It will interfere with my personal liberty, for, like you fellows, I will have to keep dark."

"Great Jericho!" gasped Wallace. "Who do yer s'pose informed on us?"

"I have my idea."

"What is it?"

"Just before the officers came in I saw that Valentine Dessaint at the door. He gave us a sharp look."

Wallace slapped Dane on the back.

"That's it!" he cried. "It was that cantankerous critter. I wish I had slit his gizzard a long time ago. I'll do it now the first chance I get."

"Well," said Dane, gazing about apprehensively, "this won't do for us. We are apt to be spotted here any moment."

"The first street we enter after leaving here we may meet the foe also."

"Well, what will we do?"

"I have got an idea."

Dane sprang up and glanced at the sign upon the door.

"Nobody here will know us," he continued. "Let us go in here and hire a room. We can keep dark for a few days and then get out in the night, or adopt some kind of disguise."

"Good!" cried Wallace, eagerly. "Yer quite a schemer, my boy."

It did not take the two villains long to execute this move. They ascended the steps and rang the bell.

The landlady, who was partially blind, came to the door.

Dane did the talking in a suave manner, and the result was that the woman hastened to show them a front room on the floor above.

"We would like to have our meals served in the room," said Dane, as he paid a week's rent in advance. "If there is an extra charge for that we will pay it."

"Very well, sir," replied the woman, as she withdrew and left the villains alone.

Dane sank into a chair and lit a cigar.

"We might as well make ourselves at home," he declared coolly. "I think this is the best move we could have made, Dan."

"So do I," agreed the incendiary. "It suits me. I would as lief stay here for a while yet."

"The same. Are you a good hand at a disguise?"

"Not very," replied Wallace.

"Well, I think I can make up so that I would not be known after dark. We had ought to post Kate, you know. I expect she will want our help very soon now."

"All right, boss. Jest as you say."

Dane puffed leisurely at his cigar a few moments. Then the landlady came in with the evening meal.

The two lodgers ate it without hesitation and both evinced good appetites. After he had finished Dane arose and sauntered to the window.

He glanced carelessly out upon the street. As he did so, he suddenly recoiled with a gasping cry:

"Great heavens! We are lost!"

"What!" ejaculated Wallace, leaping to his feet.

"Look!" cried Dane, with pallid face. "Don't you know him?"

Wallace was by his side and glanced out of the window. A man was coming up the front steps leisurely. He was familiar to both villains.

It was Dessaint.

"He has spotted us!" Dane exclaimed in alarm.

But Wallace was a trifle calmer.

"Nothing of the kind, pardner," he said phlegmatically.

"Don't you see he has a latch-key in his hand? There ain't any officers with him."

"But what is he coming here for?"

Then all in an instant the truth flashed over Dane. He turned to Wallace and their eyes met.

"This is his lodging-house," said Dane. "This is his stopping-place, and—as I live, Dan, we are in luck!"

They watched Dessaint ascend the steps and entered the house. Then Dane went to the room door and heard him ascend the stairs.

Through the crack of the door he also saw him advance along the hall and enter the very next room to theirs. The door closed, and then Dane turned to Wallace.

"What a situation!" he exclaimed. "He is in that very next room."

"And he don't know that we are here."

"Exactly! If there is not a bad lock on that door I'll risk that I could pick it while he's asleep."

"What a scheme. We could settle accounts with him, I reckon. A knife across the windpipe and they'd be no outcry."

Thus the two villains discussed a most blood-thirsty problem. Neither possessed the slightest particle of humanity or dread of crime and its awful consequences.

They thought at the moment only of the feasible chances of getting rid of their foe. As the night came on, they discussed a plan to secretly enter Dessaint's room in the dark and murder him.

"He knows too much about us," muttered Dane. "Then he is in your way, Dan, and would hang you if he could. Yes, Valentine Dessaint must feel the cold steel."

But the villains' plans were destined to miscarry that night, for at a late hour they heard Dessaint close and lock his room door and go out.

"If you don't come back," muttered Dane, "the jig is up for to-night."

"Never mind," rejoined Wallace. "We can wait until to-morrow night."

Thus the two villains reconciled themselves to waiting for Dessaint's return to enact a horrible blood-curdling crime.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUDDEN BLOW.

With that fearful fall into the suddenly inundated flume it would seem as if Bert White's career had reached a most unhappy termination.

But fate had not decreed that he should meet death in so summary a manner. A kind providence watched over his destiny yet.

Over into the flume he went, and the raging waters hurled him like a puppet against the smooth stone wall of the passage.

He was carried around like a rocket on the crest of a mighty wave of water for fifty feet. Then he encountered a slippery spile driven deep into the bed of the canal.

Instinctively he grasped at this, and as the waters rose he only clasped the wooden post nearer the top.

At first the thundering waters would not admit of his calling for help. It was not until Dane and Kate Starr had left that the waters ceased their volume. Then Bert shouted loudly for help.

At first he feared that his position was so isolated that nobody would hear him and that he would perish in this terrible position.

He could swim, but this was of little avail to him, for it would not enable him to get out of the flume.

Ten feet above the surface of the highest water, smooth, slippery granite walls were built. To scale these was an utter impossibility, for there was no foothold.

There was a curve in the wall of the flume which prevented the men who opened the gate from seeing him. Altogether, Bert's position was a most desperate one.

But his good angel had not yet forsaken him. Suddenly he

heard a cheery cry and, looking up, saw Will Evans on the wharf above.

"Keep up, Bert, I've save you!" cried his young friend.

It will be remembered that the curiosity of Will Evans had induced him to follow Bert after he had left him so uncere- moniously a short time before.

Will had followed Bert as far as the mill lumber yard, and had here lost track of him. After a futile search among the lumber, he had reached the flume just in time to hear Bert's cry and note his position.

It did not take Will long to find assistance in the mill. A long rope was procured and thrown to Bert, and he was safely drawn out of the place.

Bert made no farther explanation to the mill hands than that he had accidentally fallen into the flume, but as he walked away he told Will Evans all.

He took leave of Will Evans at a corner near and went straight home. Of course, Mrs. White was greatly alarmed, but Bert gave her no details of the affair, merely hinting at the bursting of a line of hose in practice.

After donning fresh apparel he went again upon the street. He was determined now that Lester Dane should no longer evade the law openly.

He went directly to headquarters and laid the whole matter before the police. A warrant was at once issued for Lester Dane's arrest.

Leaving the police station, Bert met a number of newsboys just coming from a newspaper exchange.

"Extra! All about the fight in Montmorenci's place, and the killing of Officer Day! Extra here!"

Bert instantly purchased one of the papers and read the following under a glaring caption on the first page:

"Extra.—Fearful encounter in Montmorenci's saloon between Police Captain Dean's men and the incendiary gang which has for so long infested Fulton. Officer Day shot through the heart by the villains. They escape after a running fight."

"Well," muttered the young fireman, "one object is gained, anyhow. There is no doubt but that the incendiaries will take the alarm now and get out of town."

He walked on down the street aimlessly for a short ways, when suddenly he received a startling surprise.

He came face to face with a familiar personage who held out a hand to him and said in a dignified way:

"Bert White, shake hands with me. If I have ever insulted you in any way I am sorry for it."

"Clyde Faulkner!" exclaimed the young fireman, dumfounded. Then he remembered the scene in the mill yard, in which Faulkner had just played a better part, and a revulsion of feelings came over him.

"I cannot blame you," said Clyde, as he drew back his hand with an evident spasm of pain. "I have disgraced myself, and am not worthy the friendship of any honorable man."

"Enough!" cried Bert, eagerly. "Give me your hand. I am glad to accept your apology, Clyde. The past is buried."

A joyful exclamation escaped young Faulkner's lips.

"Do you mean that?" he asked eagerly. "Can you overlook my treatment of you? Will you believe me when I tell you that I have done with Lester Dane?"

"I heard all," said Bert. "I saw you play a noble part, Clyde. I am satisfied of your sincerity."

"My eyes are opened now, and I am no longer under Lester Dane's accursed influence. I wonder at myself that I should be so long deceived. But I think I would not come out of the spell so quickly had it not been for that awful proposition of murder. I then saw that I was in merciless hands. It broke the spell."

"Your father will be pleased to learn of your change of mind," said Bert.

"Ah! my father!" groaned the young profligate. "How I have abused his trust and his kindness! Ah, my conscience smites me now! I wish I could take it all back."

"I know that he will forgive you," cried Bert, eagerly.

"Yes, but that does not take the weight off my mind, Bert. Oh, I have deceived my father almost to the verge of ruin."

Clyde turned his gaze away, and the young fireman could see that he was deeply affected. But he did not understand the purport of his remarks until later.

He was about to make some kindly expression of sympathy when suddenly a man in semi-police uniform stepped up and confronted them.

"Is this Mr. Clyde Faulkner?" he asked, with a keen glance at the mill-owner's son.

"That is my name," replied Clyde. "What can I do for you?"
 "Please accompany me to headquarters," replied the officer, producing a paper. "Here is a warrant for your arrest."
 "What for?"
 "The charge, I believe, is forgery."
 "But I am innocent."
 "That you must prove in a trial," said the officer resolutely.
 "Come, you are now under arrest. Make no resistance on peril of your life."

CHAPTER XIII.

BERT INTERCEDING FOR CLYDE.

The scene baffled description. For a moment Bert could not believe but that he was dreaming.

"Arrested!" he exclaimed, in utter stupefaction. "You, Clyde Faulkner, arrested for forgery!"

"I am innocent," cried the young profligate, turning to Bert with a pallid face. "I think I know what it means now. Two weeks ago I cashed a thousand-dollar check for Lester Dane, made payable to bearer, and signed by a wealthy firm in New York. That check I deposited for collection, and they have no doubt issued the warrant. Dane is the forger, not I."

Then he turned to the officer and said:

"I am ready to go with you."

"I will take the news to your father at once," said Bert, eagerly. "He will bail you out."

"Thank you," replied Clyde, simply.

Thus the arrest was made, and Clyde Faulkner, son of the magnate of Fulton, was led to the station-house to be given a cell by the chief of police. In an incredible space of time the report had spread like wild-fire over the little town.

Of course it reached Mr. Faulkner at the mill. For a moment he was stunned, then he set his lips firmly.

"Of course you will bail your son out?" ventured a friend.

"No, sir," replied the mill-owner sternly. "If my son, with all the good teaching he has had, has descended to that level, he must stand the punishment. I would be cheating the ends of justice to assist in extricating him from his position."

This was characteristic of the magnate. Upright and honorable himself, he was, nevertheless, an impartial judge. Even though it wrung his heart, he would not lift his hand to spare his erring son the punishment which in his belief he must need.

But Bert White believed grimly in Clyde's innocence. He was not satisfied to stand idly by another's crime.

Accordingly the next day he sought an interview with Mr. Faulkner at his house.

The mill-owner admitted Bert to his private room. The lines upon his face and its pallid hue was evidence that he had passed a sleepless night.

"Well, Bert," he said pleasantly, "what can I do for you?"

"I have come to see you upon important business," said Bert soberly. "It concerns Clyde, Mr. Faulkner."

The mill-owner gave a start, and a spasm of pain seemed to convulse him, but he went on calmly.

"What may it be, my boy?"

"Of course you know that he is in jail. I have come to ask you to bail him out, for he is surely innocent."

A gasping cry escaped the stern man's lips.

"If I knew that!" he cried, but checked himself. "How do you know this, Bert?" he asked.

"I know that he is a victim of Lester Dane's rascality. Clyde has been simply injudicious, but not guilty, Mr. Faulkner. You know I was with him when he was arrested."

"Clyde has been very wild of late."

"Yes, but believe me, he has committed no crime," said Bert, earnestly. "Listen and I will convince you."

With this he proceeded to detail to Mr. Faulkner the incidents in the lumber yard and also his narrow escape from death in the waters of the flume.

"Lester Dane is now a fugitive from the law," declared Bert. "He has showed his hand at last and will surely be brought to justice before long."

"And you saw and heard Clyde break faith with Dane then and there, when it was proposed to him that he should assist in the murder of my ward, Eva Montrose?"

"I did, sir," replied Bert.

"So Lester Dane is the secret foe who has made so many attempts on Eva's life. Heavens! this is a horrible affair all around. It is time that these schemers were brought to the bar of justice."

"And they soon will be," declared Bert confidently.

"This forged check—you say it was a check made payable to bearer and not indorsed by Dane?"

"Yes."

"And Clyde merely cashed it for him?"

"That is it, sir."

"It may be true," declared Mr. Faulkner, rising like one in a dream. "Perhaps I may have been hasty. Bert, I will go with you. My hat."

Bert hastened to give the magnate his hat from the rack near, and together they passed out of the house.

They were soon at the office of the town magistrate and Mr. Faulkner bailed his son in the sum of five thousand dollars. Then he turned to Bert, just as the officer was going to open Clyde's cell door.

"Bert White, I thank you. Much deeper than you can know is my gratitude to you for what you have done. I will remember this noble act of yours."

Bert modestly disavowed the existence of any indebtedness and then took his leave, preferring that father and son should meet in his absence. But the events of the day were not over.

The victim of Kate Starr's blackmailing scheme came up to Bert eagerly and, extending his hand, said:

"I'm glad to meet you, my boy. Indeed, I have been looking for you."

"What can I do for you?"

"Let us go to some retired place and I will tell you. Oh, merciful heavens!"

Dessaint started back with pallid face and shortened breath. His eyes, like bright balls of fire, were bent upon a female form coming across the street.

"It is she," he hastily interrupted. "I know her—that face——"

Bert had listened with amazement. Had the man gone mad? Dessaint so far recovered himself as to note this in Bert's face, and he hastened to say hurriedly:

"It is a mistake, but there is a similarity in that woman's face and the features of an old and dear friend, whom I have long believed dead. It gave me a great start. Do you know who she is, Bert?"

The young fireman was dumfounded for a moment by Dessaint's strange manner and query.

"Do I know her?" he replied in tones of wonderment. "I had ought to know her well, Mr. Dessaint. She is my mother!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DESSAINT'S STORY.

Dessaint seemed to undergo a change with Bert's announcement.

"To be sure," he exclaimed hurriedly yet calmly. "I am greatly mistaken. But my nerves are so weak of late that I am easily the victim of a shock. Pardon me, Bert. Your mother wishes to speak with you."

By this time Bert had accepted the fugitive's explanation as a logical one, and the occurrence rapidly faded from his mind.

Dessaint pulled his slouched hat over his eyes and stood with his back to Bert and his mother.

Mrs. White merely gave him a glance, then welcomed Bert warmly.

"I am sorry, mother, I would like to accompany you," he said gallantly, "but I have some business to do."

"Some important firemen's meeting, I presume," said Mrs. White, with a fond smile. "Well, my boy, be sure and not get into danger, for if anything was to happen to you it would break your mother's heart. You are all I have now."

A tremor seemed to shake Dessaint's form at that moment. But neither Bert nor his mother noticed it.

"You are foolishly anxious, mother," declared the young fireman. "No harm will come to me."

A few more remarks and Mrs. White passed down the street. Dessaint turned as if on a pivot and gazed after her. He was oblivious of everything, apparently.

Bert gazed at him curiously.

"Come, Mr. Dessaint," he said finally. "I am now at your service."

Dessaint with a violent start came out of the spell. His face turned crimson.

Dessaint did not reply. But another swift tremor ran over his frame.

By this time they had turned into the street upon which was the engine-house of Resolute No. 10.

As it chanced, the engine-house was deserted, and Bert flung open the door, saying:

"Come in, Mr. Dessaint. This will be a good retired place for our talk."

They entered, and Bert seated himself on a bench. Dessaint paced up and down before him in a nervous sort of way.

"I have long sought this opportunity for a talk with you, Bert," he said earnestly. "I have become deeply interested in you, my boy."

"Indeed, sir," said Bert, calmly.

"Yes, deeply interested, and I want you to regard me as one of your dearest friends. It is my aim to win your respect and regard, Bert. Will that be possible?"

"You have that already, sir," replied Bert, wondering at the man's meaning.

"I cannot just now make it clear to you what my purpose is," said Dessaint slowly. "It is enough to say that I want your friendship. The next thing is to prove to you that I am worthy of it."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this. You no doubt are aware of the fact that there are relations between the woman Kate Starr and myself. I can assure you that it is not from choice that I keep up that woman's acquaintance."

Bert was well aware of this, but he said nothing, and Dessaint went on.

"It is therefore necessary for me to outline to you the exact reason why I have relations with that scheming woman. But in order to do this I must impart to you the great secret of my life."

Bert knew well what this was, but made no comment.

"You will never betray me?"

"Never."

"Then I will tell you the sad, the awful story of my life," said Dessaint, in a constrained voice. "I will not enter into details, but suffice it to say that in early life I was adjudged guilty of a crime which was committed by another. That crime was murder."

"Murder?"

"Yes. Oh, Bert, how I have suffered since that fearful hour when sentence was pronounced upon me! But I was innocent, Bert. Life was dear to me and I believed that with liberty I should some time be able to prove my innocence. Therefore I made my escape. From that day to this I have labored with that end in view. I have been a fugitive, a hunted man. I have not as yet succeeded in gaining the necessary evidence to clear me, but I hope to in the near future."

Bert was listening intently.

"Heaven grant that you may," he said.

"Thank you, my boy. I knew that you would believe me. Of course, I am now in your power. But I trust you."

"You may trust me to the death," declared the young fireman earnestly. "I do not believe that you are a murderer."

"Heaven bless you, Bert White. You have cheered me more than words can tell. But to resume my story. This woman, Kate Starr, knows of the cloud which hangs over me. She threatens to betray me if I do not accede to her regular demands for money."

"How did Kate Starr learn your secret?" asked Bert.

"For a time that was a mystery to me," replied Dessaint. "But I finally discovered that she was hand-in-glove with a villain named Dan Wallace."

"Dan Wallace!" gasped Bert. "He is one of the incendiary gang."

"Yes," cried Dessaint, with excited manner. "And, as I live, Bert, I believe he is the man guilty of the crime charged against me."

Bert now arose from his seat.

"Mr. Dessaint," he said sincerely, "I was aware of the hold that Kate Starr had upon you some while ago. I overheard a conversation between you in which she demanded money of you, and threatened to expose you as guilty of murder. Rest assured I am your friend. There is more than one reason why I should shield you. Your case is almost inimical with that of my own father. He was junior partner in the firm of Dunham & White. One day he came into the office to find his partner weltering in his life's blood with a dagger wound in his breast. Bending over him he was thus found by others, which formed links of circumstantial evidence against him. A jury adjudged him guilty, but before the day of execution he escaped, and from that day to this no trace of him has ever been found. Mother and I have lived in hopes of his safe return for many years. But we have now given him up for dead. For my own father's sake, Mr. Dessaint, I will defend you to the last, for I believe you are an honorable man."

"Your story thrills me strangely, Bert. How like—oh, how very like my own case is that of your father. I pray that he may be some day restored to you. Never lose hope, my boy."

Then Dessaint extended his hand, and in a choking way said finally:

"Now we understand each other, Bert. I shall never forget what you have done for me. Good-by."

Bert had taken the fugitive's hand impressed with a queer feeling, when suddenly a startling sound rang out upon the air. It acted upon the young fireman like an electrical shock.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

"Fire!"

Instantly Bert sprang to the big doors and flung them open. Regardless of everything now but duty, he leaped for his trumpet and fireman's hat and belt.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

The startling cry went through the town, from street to street, from lip to lip. The academy boys were coming across the campus like race-horses.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRAP.

Disappointed in not being able to entrap Dessaint that night in the lodging house where they had sought refuge, Dane and Wallace had as a next resort sought to establish communication at once with Kate Starr.

The landlady was summoned to the room, and as a result a neighbor's boy was hired to carry a message as follows:

"DEAR KATE—You will no doubt see by the morning newspapers that we are now fugitives from the law. The game is pretty near up so far as we are concerned. We can, however, help you in your little game if you will give us directions. There is yet risk, and we shall have to move about in a disguise. Send word back at once just what your plans are. Yours ever,

"LESTER DANE."

The answer came at a late hour that night and at once set all doubts at rest.

The actress specified that her plans were working admirably, and that she would require their presence before the hour of noon at a small isolated cottage in the outskirts of Fulton, the next day.

The villains read this with much satisfaction.

The next morning they were occupied in various preparations. It required some little tact to get out of the house unobserved in their disguises, but they succeeded.

An hour later they had reached their destination, a small, miserable-looking cottage house, which was nearer being a shanty after all.

They were met at the door by Kate herself.

The villains were ushered into a small room, wretchedly furnished. Upon a table in the center of the apartment was a wine bottle and glasses.

Dane made for this and poured out a liberal dram. Wallace followed his example.

"Well, Kate," said the former villain, as he sank into a chair, "how is the game working?"

"To a successful ending, I believe," declared the actress, confidently. "I am sorry to hear that you have the peelers on your track."

"We must make one final effort," declared Dane. "It is win or lose."

"I tell you we will not fail," declared Kate, confidently. "I have the wires well laid."

"Ah! you have not yet told me," said Dane.

"I will, then."

With this Kate took from a shelf a written note and threw it upon the table.

"Read that," she said.

Dane picked it up and perused it, Wallace at his shoulder. Thus it read:

"TO MISS EVA MONTROSE. DEER MISS EVA—P'raps you don't know as how I am just about shufflin' off this mottle coil, but I thot I'd jist write ye and let ye come an' see me, as I have got suthin' to tell ye before I die. I was your mother's nurse, an' I promised her I'd never tell a certain secret until you get to be of age. But I am dyin', an' if you want to know what it is, cum at once to Tim McIntire's house jest beyond the cross-

roads on the Arlington turnpike. You know where it is, for you sent some clothes to Tim's children when he wuz sick an' cudn't work. Come at about two o'clock sure. Mrs. McIntire writes this for me. Yours trooly,

"MARY ANN BIRD"

"That is a fac-simile copy of the letter which has reached her before this," declared Kate, complacently. "It is a bait which I believe is sure to catch."

"By Jupiter! You are a schemer indeed," exclaimed Dane, admiringly. "Your game is——"

"To get her in this house. In fact, it is a clever decoy."

"But this Mary Ann Bird. Did you ever know her?"

Kate laughed hilariously.

"She is a product of my imagination," she declared. "You see how I have worded the letter."

"Another question," said Dane, slowly. "Whose house is this?"

"Tim McIntire's house."

"Good!" ejaculated Dane. "It now only remains for the bird to fly in its cage."

He consulted his watch.

"It is nearly two o'clock now," he declared. "Time is almost up."

Wallace had gone to the window and now gave a sharp cry:

"She is coming," he said, excitedly.

The clatter of horses' hoofs and the rumble of wheels were heard as a coach rattled up to the door. Then a slight figure leaped out and came up to the door of the shanty.

The bait had taken, for it was no other than Eva Montrose.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE TOILS.

Kate Starr in an incredible space of time made up as an old woman. She threw a long, ragged shawl over her shoulders, drew on a tattered petticoat and a disheveled wig. Two or three passes of her hand from a cosmetic bottle produced an aged complexion and wrinkles.

Then she shaded her face by drawing her shawl partly over it and hobbled to the door.

"How do you do, Mrs. McIntire?" said Eva, pleasantly, as Kate in this guise responded to the knock.

"Arrah, may heaven bless us, is it the gude lady hersilf?" cried Kate, simulating Mrs. McIntire's voice to perfection. "Cum right in, me dear. I'm that glad to see ye, I cud kiss ye."

Eva did not seem to heed the last remarks, for she turned to the driver and said:

"You may return for me in an hour. James."

"Very well, mum," said the driver, respectfully, and then drove off. Eva entered the house and Kate closed the door behind her and shot the bolt into place.

Eva removed her wrap.

"I hope the children are all well," she remarked.

"Oh, yis, mum."

"And your husband?"

"He is well indade."

Kate led the way to the door of an inner room. As she did so Eva chanced to see her foot below the hem of her dress.

A thrill of surprise was accorded the young girl as she noted how out of keeping it was with the other features of Mrs. McIntire's anatomy, shod as it was in a kid boot.

Yet she suspected nothing.

Kate opened the door to the inner room, and Eva preceded her.

But the young girl had not yet crossed the threshold when she was face to face with Dane and Wallace. All in that instant she saw and realized the awful trap into which she had walked.

An awful cry of horror pealed from her lips.

"Grab her, Dan!" cried Dane, as he sprang forward. "Let up on your screeching, my young chicken, or I'll shut your wind off."

As Dane seemed likely to put this brutal threat into execution, Eva desisted and struggled to free herself from their grip.

But in vain. They held her as in a vise.

"Easy, there!" gritted Dane, savagely. "This time, Eva Montrose, you will not escape my vengeance."

"Monster!" breathed the terrified young girl, who had now cast off the first feeling of faintness and assumed an air of bravery. "This is a villainous trick."

Ha, ha! Think you so?" cried Dane, with evil exultation. "So was that in which you defrauded me of my share in the fortune which you appropriated as your own."

Eva now understood all. A strange light flashed in her eyes.

"What!" she cried quickly. "Then it was you, was it, Lester Dane, who so many times sought my life and failed? And that was your incentive, then?"

"Well, have it so," said Dane, coolly. "You stand in the way of my inheriting the Montrose millions. If it was not for you I would be the direct heir."

"Then that is why you seek my life?"

"Yes."

Eva drew a deep breath. She was a brave girl, but the odds seemed powerfully against her.

She turned a gaze upon Kate Starr. She was a woman like herself, but in her face she read no sign of compassion. As well might she appeal to stone.

"Then you mean to kill me," she said hoarsely. "That was your purpose in decoying me here."

"There is just one concession upon your part will save your life," said Dane, tersely.

An eager light shone in Eva's eyes. Life was dear to her.

"What?" she asked.

"You shall fix matters so that within three days I shall have one hundred thousand dollars, which is only one twentieth of the real fortune."

"The money is not yet mine. It is held by the trustees until I am of age."

A bitter curse escaped Dane's lips.

"Then your last hope is gone," he declared savagely. "The only way and the best way for me to get that money is to put you out of the way."

Eva's face paled and she grew sick and faint.

"You cannot mean that," she said persuasively. "It would be a crime most dreadful. My guardian, Mr. Faulkner, will pay you the money for me."

"Yes, and jug us for it," said Dan Wallace coarsely. "What's the use in fooling, Lester? If yer goin' to do ther job let's have it over with."

"So I say!" agreed Kate Starr at once.

Dane hesitated no longer.

"That is right," he cried decidedly. "Well, Kate, what was your plan?"

The actress pointed to the bed.

"Tie her to that," she said briefly.

It was useless for Eva to resist. Stout cords were procured, and the young girl, in a reclining posture, was tied to the bed.

Then Kate Starr turned to a basket of shavings and chips which stood in a corner by the fireplace and dumped them into the middle of the room.

She took a match from a safe upon the wall and lit it. Thrown among the shavings, an instant blaze sprang up.

Next the scheming woman sprang into the next room and set fire to a mass of inflammable material there.

"The work is done!" she cried jubilantly. "The next thing is for us to gain our own safety."

They then left the house in a hurry.

They vanished down a path through a stretch of woods back of the shanty. It was a fiendish deed, and one of which only the most hardened mind could be capable.

Left to such an awful fate in the burning shanty, Eva Montrose's sensations were far beyond description. For a time she was numb and stupefied with horror and sheer excess of wild despair.

It was as if death had its clutches upon her. It seemed as if no power short of a divine providence could save her. Her lips moved in prayer, and she tried to resign herself to a fate which seemed inevitable.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAVED.

The smoke grew thicker and more stifling, and flames crept through the pile of chips and shavings.

One fact had been overlooked by the incendiaries. Not five hundred yards from the house was a fire signal box. It was an innovation and on trial, being one of the first experimental telegraph signals ever used.

The result was that a neighbor who chanced to be passing saw smoke coming out of the windows of the shanty.

"By gosh!" he cried, whipping up his horse. "McIntire's

away and his house is afire. I'll jest try that new-fangled alarm now."

Accordingly he drove his horse with all speed to the signal box and pulled in the alarm. The distant boom of the bell was heard.

It was this alarm which had interrupted Bert's discussion with Dessaint.

We have seen how exceedingly prompt Resolute No. 10 was to answer the call. Bert knew from the fact that it was a signal alarm that the fire was on the Arlington road.

It was a long, hard run, but the Resolute boys kept on at a great rate of speed.

Soon they turned a bend in the road and saw the fire. A cry of triumph went up from the Resolute boys as they saw that they were again the very first upon the scene.

So scattered was the population in this district that when the fire company arrived the only other person on the scene was the neighbor who had given the alarm.

He was endeavoring to draw water from a well in a bucket and extinguish the flames through a window.

Bert hastily gave orders to run a line of hose to the river near, which was quickly done.

Bert's first thought was always of human life. He did not believe that the shanty could be saved, and first of all wanted to make sure that nobody was in it.

By this time the line of hose had been brought up from the river, and the stream was now got upon the fire.

As the flames were bursting out through the windows of the front room, Bert ordered the stream to be played into the shanty there.

This was done, and as the water rushed through the broken sash a mighty cloud of smoke came pouring out.

Bert had not thus far dreamed that the fire was incendiary. But at this juncture a thrilling incident occurred.

Suddenly there drove up into the yard an open carriage with a white-faced driver. He gazed at the fire in amazement and not a little of terror.

Bert saw the team and at once recognized it as Mr. Faulkner's private equipage.

At once he turned to the driver.

"What are you doing here, James?" he asked sharply, while in that instant a swift suspicion crossed his mind.

"The young lady, sorr, Miss Eva," exclaimed the frightened coachman.

A mighty thrill seized possession of Bert White. He turned deadly pale.

"What!" he cried almost fiercely. "Why don't you speak, you blockhead. What of Miss Eva? Where is she?"

"Sure, sorr, that I don't know," replied the terrified fellow. "I left her here an hour since, sorr. I was to return for her——"

"Heavens!" gasped Bert, with white face, as he turned to the burning building with a deadly resolution uppermost in his breast.

As he did so one of the hosemen approached him, saying excitedly:

"Bert, there's somebody in that house. We heard them scream just now."

This was enough for Bert White. He seized a woollen scarf which he carried for the purpose and bound it lightly across his nostrils.

Then seizing an ax, he made for the window of the rear room.

With a blow of the ax he dashed in the sash.

Then placing a hand upon the sill, he vaulted lightly into the room beyond.

As he did so he heard a faint, stifled cry. He shouted reassuringly:

"If that is you, Eva, have good courage. I will save you."

No answer came back.

He called repeatedly as he groped his way about, but no answer came back. Frantically he searched the room.

The heap of material which had been fired in this room had burned its way through the floor and fallen into the cellar. This had been the saving of Eva's life, for had it reached the bed upon which she was bound, she must surely have been burned to death.

Bert had nearly made the circuit of the room before he reached the bed.

The smoke was less intense here, and he got a partial breath. He saw the dim outlines of the bed, and the sense of feeling discovered Eva's unconscious form.

"Heavens!" he gasped, as he felt for his clasp-knife to sever the bonds. "This is a most diabolical scheme. But she shall be saved or we will die together."

He severed the cords which bound the unconscious girl and then knelt over her.

There was an awful suspicion that she might have succumbed to the smoke and be dead, but, to his ineffable joy, he felt her pulse beating.

Also, she moved and gasped as consciousness came back to her.

"Save me!" she whispered in despair. "Oh, save me! Do not leave me here to die!"

"Save you!" cried Bert, with all the fervor of his soul. "Ay—or I will die with you."

"It is you, Bert White?" she cried joyously as she clung to him. "Oh, heaven be praised!"

Bert lifted her light form in his arms and essayed to reach the window and the outer air.

But at that awful moment the volume of smoke increased frightfully, there was a sudden terrible crash and a falling sensation, and Bert experienced a stunning blow upon the head. For a few brief moments he was insensible.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLYDE'S ADVENTURE.

But luckily Bert's fainting spell was brief, else it might have determined his fate.

The truth was, the floor of the cabin had given way and both had been precipitated into the cellar.

For an instant upon recovering Bert felt and saw smoke and flames in an ocean about him, and had given himself up for lost, when suddenly he experienced a sudden shock.

A mighty avalanche of water came plunging down full upon him, driving away the smoke in a radius of some feet, extinguishing the flames and bringing with it a current of fresh air.

It was Bert's salvation. By the merest chance the young firemen turned the stream of water full upon him.

The cellar was speedily flooded to the depth of a foot, but there was great danger of suffocation threatening Bert and his fair charge, and accordingly he shouted lustily:

"Help, help! Put down a ladder, boys! Help us out!"

A great cry was heard above, and then Bert saw faces peering down upon him. The next instant a ladder was lowered and strong arms pulled the two out of their position of danger.

As Bert emerged with Eva Montrose in his arms a wild shout went up from the crowd which had assembled.

Once more the boy chief of No. 10 had covered himself with glory.

The fire was now under control. Only the framework of the shanty was left, the interior being gutted.

Bert realized that Eva needed medical attention at once, for the shock to her nerves had been great.

So without asking an explanation from her, he carried her to the carriage. He left matters in charge of Gus Kircher, and then entering the carriage with Eva, commanded James to drive them to Mr. Faulkner's residence with all haste.

On the way thither, however, Eva recovered sufficiently to be able to give an account of the experience in the shanty. Bert listened with horror and indignation.

"Those villains shall no longer cheat justice," he declared forcibly. "They must be jailed at once."

Arrived at the Faulkner residence, Eva was taken to her apartments and care given her.

Mr. Faulkner listened with horror to the account of the dastardly attempt to commit a horrible crime.

"Lester Dane must be captured," he cried vehemently. "How long is this state of affairs to go on? How long is this young girl's life to be threatened? Is there no detective able to track this villain down?"

"It cannot go on much longer," declared Clyde Faulkner, who was present. "I am determined that my honor shall be vindicated. I would like to meet Lester Dane at this moment."

It was later in the day that Bert left the Faulkner mansion and went down to the engine-house of No. 10.

The particulars of the fire and Bert White's daring deed of rescue had spread like wildfire through the town.

Not long after Bert's departure Clyde left the house and set out for a brisk walk in the outskirts of the town.

It was not long before he had reached a long iron bridge which spanned the river. This was called the North bridge, and the current of the river was here quite swift and deep.

As Clyde was crossing the bridge a man dressed in rough

garb came toward him. At sight of Clyde, however, he turned quickly about.

It was not this singular move alone which excited the young man's suspicions. Something in the fellow's walk was familiar, and he did not seem to bear the stamp of the genuine laborer.

Gazing sharply at him, Clyde determined to investigate this suspicious personage. Without a thought of consequence, he overtook him and placed a hand upon his shoulder.

The man wheeled as quick as a flash, and a great cry escaped Clyde's lips.

"Lester Dane!" he gasped.

It was indeed the scheming villain. His eyes were lurid in their expression.

"Well," he snapped. "What do you want, Whippersnapper?" Clyde's face flushed.

"I want you, Lester Dane," he declared boldly. "The law wants you as well, for various crimes."

"Crimes!" sneered the villain. "It is well for you to talk to me that way, you young softhead. I'd like to know who is deeper in the mire than you."

"You were making a stool-pigeon of me from the first. My eyes are opened and you cannot deceive me longer."

"You haven't got the courage of a poltroon. If you had stuck by me we would have been millionaires now."

"I have all the money I desire. Were I as poor as Job, I would never stoop to crime to gain a fortune, though."

"Well, why have you stopped me here?"

"For a good purpose," replied Clyde, glancing about. "I mean to bring your miserable career to an end. You shall sleep behind prison bars to-night."

"What? You mean to arrest me?"

"Yes."

Dane glared wolfishly at Clyde.

"You have no right to do that."

"No, but I shall hold onto you until an officer can be summoned. Oh, you cannot escape."

"Well, you are a fool indeed," returned the villain with a scornful laugh. He started to move away at the same moment.

Clyde had looked in vain for a glimpse of some person whom he might call to his aid. Nobody was in sight. Impelled by the fear that his man might escape, he seized his arm.

Instantly Dane grappled with him. There was a murderous purpose in the villain's mind. A sharp, terrible struggle followed. Clyde in vain tried to overcome his foe.

Dane was the stronger and forced Clyde against the bridge parapet. Suddenly, with superhuman strength, he lifted him bodily and flung him over the edge.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DETECTIVE.

Lester Dane had only the desire to rid himself of an enemy when he flung Clyde Faulkner over the bridge parapet.

Clyde felt that he was being worsted, but struggled bravely. He was unable, however, to overcome his foe.

When he felt himself going over the parapet, a cry of terror pealed from his lips.

Fortunately it caught the ears of a person who was passing under the bridge along a foot-walk by the river-bank.

This was no other than Bert White, as fate willed it. Bert often took this path as a short-cut to his home.

The young fireman heard the cry and was instantly transfixed with horror as he saw the two struggling forms so far above.

"Heavens!" he gasped. "It is murder!"

The next moment young Faulkner's form came hurtling down through space and struck in the middle of the stream.

His white, upturned face was turned in Bert's direction.

Instantly the young fireman threw off his coat.

"Can you swim?" he cried.

"No," replied Clyde. "I am sinking."

This was enough. Bert White was not the one to hesitate. He instantly leaped into the current and swam out to the pier.

Clyde had managed to cling to the corner of the pier. When Bert reached him by dint of great exertion, he supported him in the swift current and after a hard struggle reached the shore.

"Bert White!" panted Clyde, with extended hand. "Heaven bless you. You have saved my life."

"That is nothing," returned the young fireman, as he wrung the water from his clothing. "Who was it threw you over?"

"Lester Dane!"

"What! That villain?" gasped Bert.

"Even so," replied Clyde, glancing upward to the top of the bridge. "Do you suppose we could catch him now, Bert?"

"We will try," cried the young fireman in a ringing voice, as he shook the water from him as well as he could. "Never mind the ducking, Clyde. Come on."

Young Faulkner was game and followed Bert up the steep bank. Arrived on the bridge, however, no sign of Dane could be seen.

The pathway of the bridge was of soft soil. In this the footprints were plainly visible. It required only a brief examination to determine the fact that Dane had fled down toward the center of the town.

Together, accordingly, they followed the footprints as far as the solid pavement. Here, of course, they were lost.

Night was fast coming on, and finally, at the street corner, Bert came to a halt.

"I am afraid the game is up," he declared disappointedly. "The scoundrel is a wily fox."

"It's too bad," agreed Clyde. "If I was not as puny as a child I could have downed him on the bridge."

Bert glanced at Clyde's damp clothing and then at his own.

"I think we would do well to get a change of apparel, for one thing," he said. "I feel somewhat moist."

"Then we shall give up the chase?"

"I am afraid we will have to."

"All right," agreed Clyde, buttoning his coat. "Better luck next time, Bert."

It was likely that they would have separated then and there but for an incident.

A man suddenly confronted them.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said politely, "but are your names Faulkner and White?"

"Yes," replied Bert, promptly.

"Good! Then I feel sure that I can rely upon you for a little assistance. I am a detective—my name is Blanchard."

"What?" exclaimed Bert, eagerly. "You are from New York? Inspector Byrnes sent you here?"

"Exactly!" replied Blanchard quickly. "Now that we know each other, we need waste but little time in explanations. I will simply say that I have located the den of incendiaries. It is on this very street, and I can bag the two ringleaders at this moment. But I must have assistance. If I took the time to go to police headquarters I might lose the quarry. See!"

"What!" exclaimed Bert, excitedly. "Do you mean Wallace and Dane?"

"I do."

"Where are they?"

"Do you see that house?"

The detective pointed to a high stoop brick house, in fact, the lodging-house in which Dessaint found headquarters and which has been described to the reader in a previous chapter.

"Yes."

"Well, they are in that building."

"Good!" cried Bert, excitedly. "We have the game cornered. But what do you want us to do, Mr. Blanchard?"

"Simply guard the rear of the house that they may not escape in that direction. My partner is now waiting for me in front of the house. Have you weapons?"

"No," replied Bert.

"Take this."

Blanchard placed a revolver in the young fireman's hand. Then he turned away, saying:

"Oblige us by holding the fort in the rear. We will do the rest, and the town of Fulton will to-night be rid of a hard pair."

It was necessary to pass through a narrow alley in order to reach the rear of the house. A yard some twenty feet square intervened to the rear door.

Even as Bert and Clyde forced the rear gate and entered the yard, they heard a loud, hoarse yell and the sounds of a scuffle in this same room.

Bert could give but one explanation.

"They have tackled the villains!" he cried excitedly. "We ought to be up there to help them, Clyde."

"What is to hinder?" rejoined Clyde.

"Nothing," cried Bert, as he made a break for the lower door. But before he could force it there was a terrific crash, the splintering of wood and glass, and a fearful catastrophe was witnessed. A man's form came hurtling down from above.

CHAPTER XX.

TWO AGAINST ONE.

When the alarm of fire rang out so suddenly upon the morning air, Valentine Dessaint had been left rather unceremoniously in engine-house No. 10 by Bert White.

He did not follow the fire company, but with a seething variety of reflections uppermost in his brain, wended his way home to his lodgings.

It was true that after throwing Clyde Faulkner from the North bridge, Lester Dane had made his way rapidly back into the town.

Foiled, and with a bitter sense of defeat, he was in no amiable frame of mind when at the corner of the street he encountered Dan Wallace.

The latter wore a look of despair and discontent, and accosted Dane in a somewhat surly manner.

"Jest ther man I wanten see," he exclaimed sharply as Dane halted.

"What do you mean?" growled Dane.

"Why, we hev played our hand and lost," replied Wallace, gloomily. "They're all onto us and we've got to cut sticks or we'll be behind bars afore we know it."

"Where is Kate?"

"Haven't seen her since the fire."

"Blast the luck! That girl Eva Montrose has the lives of a cat. Yes, Dan, the game is up. But I'd like to make one good blow for revenge before I quit Fulton."

Wallace's face lighted up.

"Well, you can do it."

"How?"

"Look here, pardner, I've an ax to grind, too. I'd like to settle accounts with that Dessaint. Understand?"

"I do."

"You help me and I'll help you. When my man is taken care of, then ther gang will help you out on your job, and we'll all quit together. I want to go to Mexico."

"Where are the boys?"

"Not but a little ways off. I can call 'em up at a moment's notice. Now, what is your game?"

A frightful, malevolent gleam came into Dane's eyes. He clenched his hands fiercely and replied:

"I have failed, and that is why I hate them all worse than ever. I would like to see the Faulkner Mills in ashes. I think the job can be done. I shall leave the country at least happy in my revenge. If you will all stick by me in this I am yours, Dan."

"Done!" cried Wallace, eagerly. "But what is done must be at once."

"Yes, this very night."

"Back to the lodging-house. I fancy Dessaint is there."

Together the two arch villains moved away down the street. At this very moment the detective Blanchard and his partner were watching them.

Into the lodging-house the two villains went and to their chamber. In the adjoining room Valentine Dessaint was sitting before a cheerful grate fire communing with his thoughts.

"Why should my life be so strangely clouded?" he exclaimed bitterly. "There are yet a few more years left to its span, and oh! if they could only be years of freedom and happiness. But I fear it can never be."

He arose and paced the room slowly and in an abstract way.

The door swung open, and two men stepped into the room.

Dessaint recognized them in an instant, and the effect upon him was something terrific. He recoiled with deadly pallor and a short, quick gasp.

"What—what is this?" he exclaimed horsely.

There was a devilish, leering light in Wallace's eyes as he smiled sardonically, and said in a hissing voice:

"Do you know me?"

Dessaint drew a deep, hard breath.

"Dan Wallace."

"Yes, and at last we are again face to face. Better for ye had ye remained in 'Frisco, my covey. Ye've run your neck into a death-trap here."

For an instant Dessaint was overcome with weakness and a fearful chill. Then the lion in his nature was aroused.

"Do you think so, Dan Wallace?" he exclaimed, in a harsh, bitter voice. "What was I to do? My honor is dear to me, and vindication my life dream. That's why I have come back here."

"Well, ye'll git it," sneered the ruffian, as he advanced a step nearer. "You shall have it right now and here. I reckon your vindication will be death."

Dessaint drew a deep, hard breath.

"I shall die hard."

"Pshaw! you are a child in our clutches. Listen. There is no hope for you, sir. One outcry will hardly fetch help here in time to save you. This is the time that we square accounts forever."

"Heavens!" gasped Dessaint, "you have come here to murder me."

"As you will."

"Why do you seek my life? You were content once with turning me over to the law."

Wallace whipped a long knife from a rear pocket. Dessaint retreated to the other side of the room.

He grasped a chair, swinging it aloft, and with deadly pale face, cried:

"Back! I warn you that I will die hard! You have come here to murder me, but my blood will be on your head. Back, I say!"

An insane laugh escaped Wallace's lips. He sprang toward his intended victim, saying to Dane:

"Close in on t'other side, Lester. Make the work quick or the peelers will be in on us."

CHAPTER XXI.

A STARTLING MEETING.

But the intended victim seemed suddenly endowed with a strength born of despair. With a mighty exertion he shook off both his foes and made a dash for the door.

Before he could reach it, however, Wallace hurled himself against him and the force of the collision sent Dessaint against one of the windows.

There was a crash, a splintering of wood and glass, and Dessaint went through the window, sash and all.

An oath escaped Wallace's lips as Dessaint vanished. He exchanged startled glances with Dane.

"Once more we've failed to connect, Lester. Blast the luck! The whole jig is up."

"No, let's pursue him."

"We will be seen and caught. We must vamoose!"

With this positive assertion Wallace started for the door. But before he could reach it there were sounds of rapid footsteps and two men appeared on the threshold.

Each held a loaded revolver. These covered the villains.

Blanchard, the detective, and his mate seemed to hold the drop on the two villains. Under ordinary circumstances Dane would have yielded.

But, driven desperate by his reverses and ill-luck, he insanely seized a chair and hurled it at Blanchard.

Crack!

The detective's revolver exploded, but it never sent a bullet true to the mark. Lester Dane's life was spared.

While the detective went down unconscious with the blow from the chair, Blanchard's brother detective was knocked over by Wallace.

The two villains escaped from the house by the front entrance.

Meanwhile, Dessaint had fallen into the hands of good friends, as the reader knows. Bert White and Clyde Faulkner had gone to the rear of the house.

They were just in time to see Dessaint's falling form and to rush to his side as he lay stunned upon the ground.

But Dessaint's career was not yet ended. He opened his eyes and came to. Clyde brought water from a well near and laved the injured man's brow.

Dessaint was sufficiently recovered to recapitulate the incidents in full. By this time the whole house was aroused.

The landlady and a number of guests came rushing out into the yard. But the detectives, Blanchard and mate, were gone. They had left in hot pursuit of Dane and Wallace.

"What shall we do, Bert?" asked Clyde, in an undertone. "I fear Dessaint is badly hurt."

"Call a carriage, Clyde," he said. "This poor man must be taken care of."

Young Faulkner hastened away upon this errand. Bert supported Dessaint's head until the carriage arrived.

Then Dessaint was tenderly lifted into it, and with Bert and Clyde was driven away.

Once in the carriage, the two young men exchanged glances.

"Do you understand it?" asked Clyde.

Bert shook his head.

"It is a mystery," he declared. "Why do those villains seek this man's life?"

"I can't make it out."

Clyde bent down over the unconscious man and scrutinized his face.

"Do you believe he will live, Bert?"

The young fireman gave a violent start and his face paled. He experienced a keen spasm of pain, he hardly knew why.

"He must live," he declared impetuously. "He must be saved. Clyde, when we reach the house, take this carriage and go for a physician."

By this time the cab had turned into the street upon which was Bert's home. As it drew up to the house Bert opened the door and sprang out.

He ran hastily up the steps first and pulled the bell. Mrs. White came to the door in response.

There was a look of surprise on her face.

"Why, Bert!" she exclaimed. "What is all this?"

"Mother," cried the young fireman hurriedly, "I have brought home an unfortunate man who lies at the point of death. It would not be charity to turn him away."

"Certainly not," she replied with customary warmth. "We are Christians, Bert. I will prepare a bed at once."

While the good woman was doing this, Bert and Clyde brought Dessaint into the house in their arms. He was placed upon the bed and at this moment again came to.

Bert's mother gave one look at the wounded man's face, then a wild scream pealed from her lips. At the same moment Dessaint uttered a hoarse, agonized cry.

CHAPTER XXII.

A TRAGEDY.

After so effectually defeating the two detectives in the scuffle in Dessaint's room, Dane and Wallace made good their escape to the street.

"We can't afford to take any more chances, Dan," asserted Dane, as they dashed away down the street. "I tell you we are in a hot territory."

"I agree with ye," replied Wallace. "Confound the luck! I hope the critter broke his neck in going through that winder. Another game lost, Lester. I'm beginning to think that we are hoodooed."

"You're right. We must get out of this town within ten minutes. But we can't strike any train."

"Why not?"

"Easy enough! If there are two detectives shadowing our lodging-house, you can bet there are as many watching the trains."

"How shall we work it, then?"

"Hoof it out of town," rejoined Dane, comprehensively. "Then after getting to a safe distance we can strike the railroad and work southward."

"You are right, boss," agreed Wallace with alacrity. "But——"

"Well, what?"

"The rest of the gang?"

An oath broke from Dane's lips.

"They can shift for themselves," he exclaimed pointedly.

"All right," agreed Wallace, sententiously. "You are the boss. So we'll cut the boys. All right. Here's for a home in Mexico and a creole wife. Hurrah!"

Suddenly three men hove into view and came excitedly toward them. They were Benton, Wemyss and Jim Warrane, of the incendiary gang.

Both Dane and Wallace halted aghast.

For a moment the two ringleaders were at a loss what to do or say. Then Wallace's ready wit came to his aid.

"Glad to see ye, boys," he cried, simulating pleasure. "This is luck. We were jest goin' ter look ye up. Yes, it's altogether too warm fer us in Fulton now. We'll have to git out and then meet at some other point."

Dane saw the point.

"Yes," he put in quickly. "It's by all means the best way. We must not be seen leaving Fulton together."

"I'll tell ye what," cried Wallace. "S'posin we all meet in Chicago at Marley's place on Clark street. You all know where."

"That will be all right," said Benton, briefly.

"All right," rejoined Wallace, moving away. "We'll see you there."

"Ahem! Ain't it about time we had a settlement? There's a few thousands due and we're a bit hard up."

"That'll be all right when we meet in Chicago," said Wallace, impatiently.

"We want to settle before we leave Fulton," he declared obdurately. "There is no use beating about the bush any longer, Dan Wallace. Give us our money now."

Benton spoke firmly and bluntly. The effect upon Wallace was frightful.

His brutal visage changed to a livid hue and his eyes were murderous in their gleam. He drew a revolver, snapping angrily:

"Well, here's what says you'll get no settlement. Now go on."

With a cry of rage, Wemyss and Warren drew revolvers and placed themselves in the path of the two ringleaders. A row was most imminent.

As chance had it, the street at this hour was deserted, so their action was not witnessed by others. For a moment Wallace and Dane were completely taken aback. But the former's temper was aroused.

The blood surged to his temples until the veins stood out like whipcords and his eyes had a dull glare.

"Fools!" he hissed. "You must not dare Dan Wallace. Blast you, for a pack of idiots! You'll bring the town about our ears. I'll give you one minute to get out of our way."

"Not until we have had a settlement," insisted Benton, resolutely. "Eh, pards?"

"Aye, aye!" cried the others.

A fierce oath leaped from Wallace's lips, and he raised his revolver. But at this moment a startling thing occurred.

A slight female form appeared upon the scene and glided between the angry men. It was Kate Starr, the actress. Her face was chalky white and her manner intensely dramatic.

"Hold!" she cried with much force. "What would you do? This is no time for dissension. We must all work together, or the gallows will claim half of us."

"Kate!" cried Lester Dane, excitedly, as he sprang to her side. "This is good news. Now we can fly together."

Kate Starr gave her lover a passionate glance and then sprang to his side.

"To the ends of the earth!" she cried. "Come, we must away."

"Never!" cried Benton, forcibly, as he sprang in front of them. "We are not to be trifled with. We have done the best we could, have risked life and all, and want our pay. We will have it or your lives shall pay for it."

"That is nothing to me," cried Dane, savagely. "Settle with Wallace. Get out of my way."

Dane started away with the actress. But, maddened beyond control, Wallace sprang after him.

"Treacherous dog!" he hissed. "You shall not desert me in this manner."

But Dane continued to move away. A diabolical oath escaped Wallace's lips and before any one could do aught to prevent, he raised his weapon and fired.

With a hoarse cry Dane flung up his arms and fell, shot to the heart. It was a terrible moment. After firing the shot Wallace dashed into a side street, and the three incendiaries fled in another direction. But with a wild, agonized cry, Kate Starr flung herself across the body of the man she had so desperately loved.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A JOYFUL REUNION.

The cry which pealed from Mrs. White's lips when she first gazed upon Dessaint's face was one of yearning recognition. The wounded man responded in like manner.

It was a mutual recognition, and Bert was astounded.

Particularly so when Mrs. White sprang forward and threw both her arms about the sick man's neck.

"Andrew, my husband!" she cried joyfully. "Restored to me after all these years. Oh, how my prayers have been answered."

"My wife!" cried the wounded man. "Oh, this is the happiest hour of my life. Yes, fate has brought me back to you, but not free from the stain, my wife. Oh, how all these years I have labored to wipe that out."

"Bert, my dear son," said Mrs. White, in a fulsome voice, "the goodness of God is great. I have often told you of your father. He is at last, in answer to my prayers, restored to us."

"My father!" exclaimed Bert, huskily, gazing at Dessaint. "But——"

"Yes, Bert, I am your father," cried the wounded man, with tears streaming down his pallid face. "Come to my arms."

"My father!" again exclaimed Bert. Then with a glad cry he sprang to that embrace which gave him such joy. "I can understand now the peculiar feeling I have always had toward you. But your name——"

"My name is not Valentine Dessaint, of course," declared the wounded man with a smile. "I am Andrew White, and Dessaint was only an assumed name. But do you not remember, Bert, of my telling you the story of my life, and how very similar it was to the story of your father's fate?"

"Why——"

"For many reasons," interrupted Mr. White with a smile, anticipating Bert's query. "I preferred first vindicating myself. Alas! I have been denied that for the thousandth time. And even now while I lie here I am in the greatest danger. If that woman Kate Starr should denounce me——"

"Never!" cried Bert, forcibly. "You are innocent of any crime, father, and you shall not suffer for it. More than that, you shall be proved innocent. Right will always triumph, and I feel that we are on the verge of a great victory."

All now drew closely about the fire. Without the night was deepening. It was a novel sensation to Bert, our boy fireman, to know that his own father had come back from the dead, and it was opening up to him vistas of new happiness.

Sitting there Mr. White told the story of his wanderings, and a thrilling narrative it was. Bert and Clyde listened spell-bound and drew a deep breath when he had finished.

"But your wanderings are at an end, father," cried Bert. "You shall never leave us again."

"Ah! would that I could be with you forever," replied Mr. White.

The fugitive spoke with earnestness. "We will secrete you here," cried Bert. "No one will ever dream of looking for you here."

Mr. White shook his head. "But you must never leave us again, Andrew," pleaded Mrs. White.

"You forget," continued the fugitive. "In this very town I am known."

"By whom?" asked Bert.

"You forget Kate Starr."

The young fireman's face darkened. "Kate Starr is in league with Dane and Wallace," he said resolutely. "They are all in with the incendiary gang. She must be taken care of. I shall have her arrested at the first chance."

"It will not avail you anything unless you have good proof."

"I will find proof," cried Bert, as he sprang to his feet and began to pace the floor. He had not taken a dozen steps when there came a sudden rap upon the door.

All gave a start and a hunted expression came into Mr. White's face. Bert, however, went to the door and opened it. Three officers walked into the room, followed by a veiled woman. The veil was thrown back, and Kate Starr, with flaming eyes, stood revealed.

"There is your man, officers. Arrest him!" she cried in a constrained voice. "There is the murderer of Oscar Dunham."

Bert White stood irresolute with clenched hand and flashing eyes. Mr. White sprang up for a moment as if looking for an avenue of escape, then he faced his foes.

"Yes," he cried, in a clear voice, "I am Andrew White, but I am not guilty of the crime charged against me."

"Mr. White," said one of the officers, respectfully, "I must arrest you upon a warrant charging you with murder. You will make no resistance."

"Hold!" cried Bert White, springing forward excitedly and pointing a finger at Kate Starr. "If you arrest this man, arrest her also. She is in league with the incendiaries, and I know it."

Kate Starr turned a mocking glance upon the young fireman.

"The officer will not arrest me," she said triumphantly. "He has no warrant."

"No," replied the officer, "I have no warrant for her arrest. If you have a charge to make against her, go before the proper magistrate. Come, Andrew White, put these on."

Manacles were slipped upon Mr. White's wrists. He turned one agonized glance upon his wife and then was led from the house.

The fearful blow was for the moment more than Bert White could stand. He heard Kate Starr's mocking laugh, and saw the gleam in her eyes which apprised him in one instant that insanity was hers in its worst form.

This was true. In a preceding chapter we left her over the dead body of Lester Dane as he had been shot by Wallace.

A sensation was created, but as life was extinct and nothing could be done for the victim of the shooting affray, an undertaker and coroner were summoned.

Kate Starr was for a time inconsolable. Then her grief was superseded by a great calmness, that strange calm which ever precedes the storm.

There were but two motives uppermost in her mind now. One of them was revenge and the other self-preservation. First she must have revenge.

Her first resolve was to betray Andrew White, and then to hunt down Wallace and shoot him on sight.

She had kept the first of resolutions successfully. Andrew White, after being at large for years, was once more in the hands of the law.

When they left the house Mrs. White, with a wild, agonized cry of despair, fell into a faint. Bert and Clyde followed the officers down the street.

Suddenly from a side street there came the sounds of a scuffle, and two officers with a man between them came into view.

Bert gave a great cry as he recognized Blanchard, the detective, and his mate, and saw that they had Dan Wallace between them.

The effect of this upon Kate Starr was beyond description. For a moment she stood quivering like an aspen.

Then a wild, maniacal scream burst from her lips. Before any one could do aught to prevent, she sprang forward and a revolver flashed in her hand.

Crack!

With a fearful hoarse cry, Wallace threw up his hands and fell. Bert and Clyde seized the madwoman in their arms, but too late to avert the second tragedy of the night.

A crowd collected and other officers came. Kate Starr was manacled and taken in a carriage to police headquarters.

An ambulance was called, and Wallace, with a bullet hole in his chest, was taken to the hospital. Mr. White was lodged in a cell at the jail, and Bert remained with him until a late hour, and had started for home when he was accorded a surprise.

A messenger came in hastily with a note from the hospital. It was from Dan Wallace, and called for an interview. Bert went thither with all haste.

He found the villain upon his deathbed. Life was ebbing fast, but he had time left to take Bert's hand and say:

"I've been a hard one, boy, but my end has come, an' I'm going to make one last confession afore I go."

"This, in the presence of witnesses, is my confession: I am the murderer of Oscar Dunham. Your father is an innocent man. It was from a motive of revenge that I threw the crime upon him."

"But I've got to pay for it. Another thing. It was Dane who forged the note for which Clyde Faulkner was pulled up."

"This is all, an' I shall feel better to die with the knowledge that I've done it. I might have been a better man, boy, but, you see, the devil was in me, and—oh, I suffocate—oh—h——"

With a choking gasp Dan Wallace fell back in the embrace of death. Bert White arose from his bedside, and it seemed as if a new life of great joy had been mercifully opened up to him all in an instant. He went at once with all haste to carry the joyful news to his imprisoned father.

The dying confession of Dan Wallace, fully substantiated, was a revelation of the deep veil of mystery which had for so many years enshrouded the fate of Oscar Dunham. It very conclusively proved Andrew White guiltless, and he emerged once more into the world to stand spotless among his legion of friends.

Kate Starr ended her life miserably in a madhouse.

Clyde Faulkner entered the mill in company with his father and became a man of prominence and great popularity in Fulton. The lesson so richly learned while in collusion with Lester Dane was to him a profitable one.

Bert White remained the young chief of Resolute No. 10, but Fulton was now cleared of its incendiaries, Wemyss, Benton and Warren being captured later.

Bert White is to-day one of the prominent business men of Fulton. Married? Of course, and who but Eva Montrose could be the happy bride? Prosperity and happiness became the lot of our brave boy fireman, and this, dear reader, brings our story to the end.

Next week's issue will contain "THE BOY SCOUTS OF THE SUSQUEHANNA; OR, THE YOUNG HEROES OF THE WYOMING VALLEY."

CURRENT NEWS

A cow belonging to J. F. Stidham, of Kelso, Wash., lost about two inches of her tongue by having it caught in a steel trap. When the cow was found her tongue was in bad shape and Stidham could not figure out what had happened until he found the trap with the missing tongue.

Thomas Carey, a business man of Iron Mountain, Mich., killed a large timber wolf with a jack-knife. The wolf attacked his team while he was driving. He hit the animal with a club and then slashed its throat. A \$25 bounty was his reward.

Lee Perry, a young ranchman near San Angelo, Texas, recently killed a monster lion on his father's ranch. Perry met the lion on a narrow passageway and had to either fall down into a canyon several hundred feet or kill the lion. He shot as it sprang at him, the bullet entering one of the eyes of the lion, killing it instantly.

After having nursed through a long illness a laborer apparently lacking means of support, Mrs. J. D. Ernest and her daughters have learned that their patient, J. M. Tuggle, of Macon, Ga., before his death had bequeathed to them \$20,000. Tuggle, it is said, had no near relatives. He arrived at Plainview, Texas, recently seeking work and was said to be a member of several fraternal orders.

Arthur Nye, superintendent of the City Water Works, Toledo, Ore., while on a trip up Mill Creek encountered a bear. Armed with a revolver Mr. Nye pursued the bear and succeeded in getting a few chance shots, but to no effect. Mr. Nye's two hounds quit the trail of a wildcat they were after and turned the bear back face to face with his pursuer, who, from short range, planted a bullet between the animal's eyes. The killing occurred within three miles of town.

Japanese interests are negotiating for the purchase from an American lumber company of its mills and business in the Philippine Islands for a sum of \$1,000,000. Increased activity has been manifested by Japanese capitalists in bidding for insular properties. They recently purchased a sugar-producing property formerly belonging to the Dominican monks, at Calamba, to the south of Laguna de Bay, Island of Luzon, and they are at present considering the purchase of several large sugar plantations, with mills and equipment.

The students of one of the high schools in Atlanta, Ga., signified willingness to take up military training voluntarily at a preparedness discussion recently, and informed Governor E. N. Harris, of Georgia, who spoke at the meeting, that it was their desire to train as reserves for the United States Marine Corps. If the school authorities sanction the movement, the Atlanta Marine High School will be the first in the United States. The United States

Marine Corps has no reserves, and, in time of war, could have the assistance of only one company of Marine Militia from Massachusetts.

The waters of the Santa Ana River came near claiming two victims near Redlands, Cal., lately, when eight converts of the Mexican mission on Herald street were baptized in the icy waters. The Rev. Francisco Lorente, the minister of the church, had one of the converts, ventured out too far in the swift stream and the current threw them off their feet. While the terrified members of the little church looked on they battled desperately for their lives and finally succeeded in reaching the bank. The minister proceeded with the service and baptized the remaining converts, although it was done nearer the shore.

BICYCLING THE "RAGE" AT WINTER RESORT.

In the Chicago Tribune's society columns, this item recently appeared: "You have to be very imaginative to guess what is the favorite sport at Palm Beach these days. It's the bicycle. If that isn't returning to primeval things! The whole place, young and old, goes in for a swim about 11 o'clock and plays around until luncheon time on the beach. And after that it's golf, tennis—then BICYCLING, and everybody's having a superb time and staying much longer than they expected to."

The pendulum of favor has for several years been swinging back to bicycling as a sport. The sporting pages of almost every newspaper is giving space to the six-day bicycle races, which have been held in increasing numbers this winter, and performing to huge crowds.

Outdoor racing has also been revived to a considerable extent. Over a hundred riders participated in a recent Chicago race, although the roads and weather were anything but favorable.

The truth of the matter is, that bicycling is such royal good fun, such exhilarating sport, that it simply cannot be relegated to the dust heap along with ping pong, and some of the other sports that enjoyed a short vogue, and then passed out of existence.

Aside from its value as a recreation and a diversion, bicycle riding never has lost its favor with thousands upon thousands of factory workers, and others who use it as the one best solution of the daily transportation problem—it has constantly grown in popularity with the younger generation, and most of the wide-awake boys of to-day who cannot urge their parents into buying a bicycle get busy and earn the money themselves.

There is a constant fund of suggestions for the man or boy who owns a bicycle or who is interested in getting one, in the catalogue of that pioneer bicycle house, which started in when the bicycle was a "craze," and has grown to occupy the place of "largest in the world." The Mead Cycle Co., to whom we refer, are always glad to send their latest catalogue to our readers. Mail your requests to them. Address to Dept. OO, Chicago, Ill.

BOWERY BEN

— OR —

THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME

BY J. P. RICHARDS

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XIV (continued)

"Be careful about your smoking, Pete," said the second man. "There's lots o' oil an' inflammatory stuff about de place dat'll burn in a hurry."

"Never you mind," said the smoker. "You can't fool us with your ghost stories. Youse Ben, all right."

"But I tell you I'm not. You've made a mistake, got hold of the wrong boy."

"Well, we can't do not'in' about it now, so's you might as well set down, an' make yerself easy. Dey's a bench in de corner. When de boss comes, he'll know de difference, if you're tellin' de trut'."

"Then it's either Hudson or Stapleton, for they both know Ben."

"You keep him comp'ny, Bill," said the smoker. "I'm goin' outside. Got a newspaper or sump'n ter let him set on, so's nothin' 'll spoil his nice duds? Get a high-toned one, a Trybune or a Post. De News or Express or Woild wouldn't do at all fur a swell duck like him."

Then with a laugh at his own wit the man went out.

Some time elapsed, and then Hudson came in with Pete and asked:

"What's the matter with the boy? We've been waiting for him to steer the kid for a long time, and he hasn't shown up. Do you suppose anything's wrong?"

"Maybe there is. Who's this, Jim?"

Hudson looked at Arthur and said:

"I don't know. Where did you get him?"

"Isn't he Bowery Ben?"

"That swell Ben? No!"

"H'm, then Snoots has made a slip and gone to the wrong place, and the young fellow wasn't bluffing at all."

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" snarled Hudson.

At that moment the door was pushed open, and Stapleton came in hurriedly.

"Well, is it all right?" he asked. "Have you got them both? Why have you kept me waiting so long for?"

"I guess there's a mistake, boss," said Pete. "This ain't Ben, is it?"

The plotter looked at Arthur and said:

"No. of course not. How is this? Who are you, boy?"

"I am Arthur Meadows."

"Son of Ben's new employer? Do you live in Forty-fourth street, near Madison avenue?"

"Yes."

"H'm! Did Ben come to your house on Saturday?"

"He did. Your spy made a mistake, Mr. Stapleton."

The man scowled and then answered:

"Maybe he did, but we can hold you for a ransom as well as any one else, my boy."

CHAPTER XV.

A BRAVE BOY TO THE RESCUE.

It was growing dark and one of the men lighted a dirty oil lamp and placed it on a table in a corner.

"Be careful with the light, Pete," one of the others said. "There's lots of inflammatory stuff around here, I told you."

"You two can stay and take care of the boy," said Stapleton, who wore a long, rough coat and a coarse cap. "We've made a mess of it as far as the girl is concerned, but there's money in this boy, so keep him safe. Stick him in the other room. I'll come and take him to a better place later."

"I wish we might have got hold of Ben," growled Hudson. "I owe him one for that affair on the East Side."

"Come on," said Stapleton. "I've something for you to do," and then he and Hudson went out.

"You fellows would like to make some money, I suppose?" said Arthur, when they were alone.

"Well, I ain't never refused a good chanct yet," returned Pete, filling his pipe and then holding a slip of paper over the lamp till it took fire.

"Put that thing out, Pete," said Bill, uneasily. "Don't go ter chuckin' it on the floor. Yer shouldn't orter smoke here at all. It's dangerous, I tell you."

"Ah, what's de harm?"

"Harm a-plenty. Dere's lots o' stuff all around what'll buyn an' den dere's de lumber yard an' de oil factory elost by, an' de wind is a-blowin' sharp."

"All right, Bill, I'll be careful," said Pete, puffing at his pipe, "but let's hear about dis money-makin' scheme of de young gent."

"How much do you think you'll get out of Stapleton for keeping me a prisoner?" asked Arthur. "Just nothing. If you will let me go now I'll give you ten dollars apiece now and more when I get home."

"It's woith more'n that," said Pete. "The boss'll fix us better."

"I don't believe it. He'll leave it to Hudson, and he's a miser. Besides, don't you see the trouble? Ben has learned of the scheme now through the messenger boy's mistake and he'll set the police on Stapleton's track at once. It's my opinion that he will decamp and leave Hudson to manage this thing. You'd better take up with my offer now, and let me go. There'll be more money in it for you and no danger at all."

"Can't do it at all," growled Bill. "Open the door, Pete, and put him in there."

Pete opened the door to the inner room, which was little more than a cupboard with a grated window, and Arthur was thrust inside and the door shut and locked.

It was quite dark outside now, and presently there was a cautious knock on the outer door and then it was pushed open and a boy wearing a messenger's uniform came shuffling into the place.

"Soy, I made a bad break," he said, "an' sent de hack up to de wrong place. Den when I got to de old woman's where de kid lives I seen Ben hissself an' I knowed dat de hull business was busted. I skipped by de light o' de moon in a hurry, you bet, else I'd got pinched."

(To be continued)

INTERESTING TOPICS

Eight vessels have been chartered for a new steamship service between Puget Sound ports on the Pacific Coast of the United States and Vladivostok. It is expected that the new service will help relieve the congestion of freight at Puget Sound.

More than 7,000 employes of the Alexander Smith & Sons Carpet Company mill, in Yonkers, N. Y., received bonuses for meritorious work the past six months which total \$82,000. Those employed ten years received 10 per cent., those working five to ten years received 5 per cent. and everybody, from President Eugene Clark down to the office boys, shared.

The Boston Nationals were insured the other day for a total of \$500,000 against accident of any nature, except such as may occur on the baseball field. The policy is a blanket agreement, covering every member of the team. It is understood that, in addition, several of the more important players are insured individually against accident of any kind.

Numerous avalanches have been reported recently and several Swiss frontier posts have been overwhelmed. Five soldiers have been killed. Others have been dug out alive. Numerous mountain roads and the Bernina railway between Switzerland and Italy are blocked. The body of Henry Hoffmann, of New York, believed to have been killed in an avalanche in the Engadine Mountains, has not been recovered.

Following the successful use of an automobile by the commanding officer of the battleship "Maryland," other warships of the United States navy are to be similarly equipped. The automobile on the "Maryland" is the personal property of its captain, but there is a movement on foot to make a medium-priced touring car the regular equipment of ships going on long cruises. "Land launches" the sailors have called the motor cars, as they are used both for the official and social calls of the officers.

What is said to be the most wonderful clock in the world is in St. Petersburg. It has ninety-five faces, and indicates simultaneously the time of day at thirty points on the earth's surface, besides the movement of the earth around the sun, the phases of the moon, the signs of the zodiac, the passage over the meridian of more than fifty stars of the Northern Hemisphere, and the date according to the Gregorian, Greek, Mussulman and Hebrew calendars. Two years were required to put the works together.

In certain parts of England \$5 a hundredweight is paid for green snail shells. They are used for inlaid work by furniture makers and are also turned into buttons. A great many of the so-called pearl buttons we

wear on our clothes are made from certain mussels. The mussel shells, upon reaching the button factories, are sawed into rough blanks, and then turned on a small lathe to the proper shape of the buttons, including the depression in the center. After this two or four holes are bored for the thread. The buttons are polished by means of a chemical fluid.

An elderly church warden, in shaving himself one Sunday before church time, made a slight cut with the razor on the extreme end of his nose. Quickly calling his wife he asked her if she had any court-plaster in the house. "You will find some in my sewing machine basket," she said. The warden soon had the cut covered. At the church, in assisting with the collection, he noticed every one smile as he passed the plate, and some of the younger people laughed outright. Very much annoyed, he asked a friend if there was anything wrong with his appearance. "Well, I should think there is," was the answer. "What is that on your nose?" "Court-plaster." "No," said his friend, "it's the label of a spool of cotton. It says 'Warranted 200 yards long.'"

The Pennsylvania Railroad Company has been making a fill of the Beaver River between New Brighton and Rochester with the intention of changing its main line between the two points to eliminate a long curve. The fill requires hundreds of carloads of cinders, which are loaded into the cars while red-hot. When unloaded they retain the heat for days. This has made the place a winter resort for hoboes. At all hours the entire embankment, a mile or more in length, swarms with a heterogeneous crowd of old and young men, who eat, drink, make merry and sleep. On the hot cinders the tramps make coffee and cook the fruits of foraging parties. When sleepy they scoop out a bed in the warm ashes, and after carefully removing the clinkers burrow down in the yielding mass and sleep in comparative comfort on the coldest nights, with only their heads visible.

An allowance in the form of gold dust comes regularly from his parents in Candle, Northern Alaska, to Colin C. Clements, a senior student at the University of Washington. Clements, who recently received some "dust" and nuggets, took it all to an assayer and turned it into coin of the realm. The remittance came in a sturdy purse made of a webbed foot, believed to be that of a ptarmigan, with the leg used as the mouth of the sack. Candle is on Kotzebue Sound, just below the Arctic circle. Because of the delayed mail service, Clements has to wait more than the thirty days, which most college students consider a long enough interval between remittances from home. He is preparing himself for newspaper work, and expects to supply the residents of his home region with the news which they now must get by telephone from Nome, across the peninsula.

FROM ALL POINTS

It is reported that the Italian navy is actively engaged at the present time in running down the submarines of the Central Powers that have been preying on Allied commerce in the Mediterranean. The methods employed by the British in the North Sea are being followed by the Italians.

An order for 350 gasoline locomotives, to be used in the trenches, has been placed with the Baldwin Locomotive Company by the Russian Government. These engines will travel on rails two feet apart, which will permit their passage through almost any part of the earthworks on the firing line for the transportation of munitions and supplies.

William Gerlack, a farmer living near Onida, S. Dak., says that for weight the members of his family are much above the ordinary. In addition to the father and mother there are eight children, the combined weight of the family being 1,730 pounds. This is an average of 173 pounds for each individual member. Three members of the family weigh only about 120 pounds each, so it is very evident that the remaining members are entitled to be placed in the heavyweight class.

Miss Dorothea Jones, a teacher in the Kanak Peak school district, California, has thrown up her job. In four months, Miss Jones confessed, she received sixteen proposals of marriage from the swains of the district. Miss Jones indignantly denies that any have been accepted. "They are looking for a cook, not a wife," she says. "I never did believe in sixteen to one, and when the sixteenth proposal came along I thought it was time to quit." It is understood there is no lack of applications for Miss Jones' job.

Doubling the capacity of West Point and Annapolis and establishing similar academies in other sections of the country are features of preparedness advocated by Congressman Frederick R. Lehlbach, of New Jersey, in a letter to his constituents. He also believes that the National Guard can be made efficient only by fusing it under the control of the Federal Government. He favors a standing army of from 300,000 to 500,000, a large increase of all classes of vessels for the navy and strengthening of the coast defenses, including the Panama Canal fortifications.

Detective Callaghan, of the Mendicant Squad, passing the new Rialto Theater, under construction at Forty-second street and Seventh avenue, New York, the other night, saw a woman, supposedly blind, tugging at the crank of a hand organ from which no sound came. Callaghan suspecting that the instrument was not genuine and that the woman was not blind, walked back of her, dropped two pennies and went on. When she thought he

was out of sight she looked for and picked up the cents. She was arrested. At the West Forty-seventh Street Station she said she was Sarah Schafcher, of No. 137 Norfolk street. She told Lieut. Clarker if she were permitted to go she would not beg again. "If this is justice," she remarked as she was being led to a cell, "I can't see it."

A railroad is projected for Finnish Lapland in order to make available deposits of iron ore in that region. The first portion to be built, if the scheme materializes, will probably be from the village of Rovaniemi, connected by rail already with the port of Kemi on the Gulf of Bothnia, and Sukuvaara, eighty-seven miles distant. From Sukuvaara further extensions of the line may be built to the mouth of the Neida River on the Arctic Ocean, whence Finland would be enabled to export iron ore all the year round. Eleven miles of this link would be in Norwegian territory. The total length of the line, which would be one of the furthest north in the world, would be 280 miles.

Success has crowned the efforts of two rural telephone company managers in Canton, Ill., to establish a physical connection between their exchanges in compliance with an order of the Public Utilities Commission. It was necessary to run the line through a conduit or tunnel 434 feet long, but of narrow diameter. First a rat with a silk fish line tied to his tail was started through the small passage. A ferret, sent after him to hurry him up, was too ambitious and caught the rat. The entire collection of rats gathered through the medium of a newspaper want ad were sent through the conduit, but the managers were never able to judge properly the ferret's handicap. A local inventive genius suggested tying a bell on a rat recently. This was done. The fish line was dragged through and then in turn a fine copper wire. The rat neglected to stop, and as a reward for faithful service he was permitted to escape.

Details of an adventure which, in romance and daring, rivals anything the war has brought to light were told by passengers of the United Fruit Company steamship Carrillo, which reached New York recently. They said in the early months of the war two brothers, P. and A. Maurer, who claimed American citizenship, escaped from a German steamship interned in a Chilean port. They struck inland. Twelve months later they emerged from the wilderness at Puerto Colombo, on the north coast of Colombia, a calling-place of the United Fruit Company. They had crossed the Andes and the swampy interior of the Continent. At the request of the American consul they were taken aboard the Carrillo. The two men tried to land at Cristobal, Panama, but the Carrillo's captain refused to permit them to do so. When the Carrillo reached Kingston, Jamaica, the Maurers were taken off by the British and put in a detention camp.

"A. J." FROM JAYVILLE

—OR—

THE BOY WHO WAS LOST IN THE BOWERY

By William Wade

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XVII (continued)

Then a light appeared in the window, and a voice called out:

"Hold on there! Hold on! Don't beat the door down. I'm a-comin' as soon as I can get on some clothes."

In a minute the door was opened by a sleepy-looking old man with nothing on but shirt and trousers.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said, looking hard at Hollins. "So you really meant it? I didn't suppose you did."

"Why, of course I meant it," was the reply. "I told you that I'd be up here to-night, and I always do as I say. How are the fish biting?"

"Don't know nothing about the fish," replied the old man: "but I know the mosquitoes are biting like all possessed. I was just able to get asleep when you came banging away on the door. Do you want a boat?"

"That's it," said Hollins. "Fit us out with three lines, too. I never tried night fishing on the Hudson before. They say it's great."

The appointment had evidently been made in advance, and the old man appeared to have no suspicions.

A. J. took hold and helped him rig up an extra line, for he only had two with sinkers attached.

Then all went aboard a small rowboat, and A. J. pulled out into the river.

"What time will you be back?" called the old man.

"It will be seven o'clock at the latest," answered Hollins. "We have to catch a train."

"Poor old idiot," remarked Jack Carter. "That's the last he'll see of his boat, I'm thinking. I'd have paid him for the use of it in advance, only it might have excited his suspicions."

"Oh, bags!" growled Hollins. "What the deuce do you care? Pull faster, A. J. I'll tell you where to turn in."

They turned in above Tarrytown station, and, making the boat fast, crossed the track and climbed the hill, keeping on to a place where there was a low stone wall which they climbed, and then dropped down behind a low, spreading spruce tree.

"Now, then, A. J., you are to get your first lesson how to do it," whispered Carter. "Of course, we don't expect you to do anything more than watch out in this case, but if you do that well you will get what we told you, and next time it will be a bigger haul."

"I'll do just as you tell me," said A. J. "That's what I'm out for to-night."

"What you don't want to do is to talk," added Hollins. "Mind that now, for if you make a sound you will find yourself up against trouble of the worst kind."

They lay there listening so long that A. J. thought they never were going to make a move, but at last Hollins whispered:

"I can hear nothing. I guess it's all right. We had better be going, Jack."

Carter arose in silence, and led the way through trees and shrubbery until they came out upon a broad lawn, in the midst of which stood a large and handsome mansion.

It was entirely dark save for a light in one window on the second story.

"That's Matt's room," whispered Carter. "I'll give the signal now."

He put his hand against his mouth and uttered a low, peculiar cry.

Immediately the light moved. It was raised, and then lowered twice, and then vanished.

"He's ready," breathed Carter. "This job is going through a-kiting if I don't make a big mistake."

They stole on to the house, halting on the piazza beside a certain window which opened on a level with the floor.

Carter tapped lightly on the glass, and the sash was immediately raised.

It was Matt Montgomery who looked out.

"So you have come?" he breathed. "Three of you. Confound it! That boy? What's the meaning of this?"

"It's all right," said Carter. "We know our business. We'll attend to him."

"But what in thunder did you bring him for? What does it mean?"

"Cut it out," snapped Carter. "There were good reasons or he wouldn't be here. Explanations come later. Is the coast clear?"

"My father and mother are both in Boston, but as luck would have it there are three visitors—Charlie Fitch and his two friends, whom you met last night."

"The deuce! What brought them here?"

"Don't know. Can't understand it. I played off drunk so they wouldn't suspect. I've fastened the doors of their rooms."

"Ha! Then you did have occasion to use the door wedges I gave you, after all? You were so blamed sure there would be no need."

"There will be no disturbance unless they make it."

"Were you listening at their doors?"

"Yes; just before I came down. All was quiet. I have no doubt they are abed, and asleep long ago."

"I don't like it," said Carter. "We had better be sure."

"You can come up and listen for yourself if you like."

"I think I'd better. How about the windows of their rooms?"

"They open on the piazza on the other side."

"It's a bad job. A. J., how about it? Did you send those fellows here?"

Something gleamed in the dim light.

It was a revolver in Jack Carter's hand, and he pressed it close against A. J.'s forehead.

"Speak, boy!" he hissed. "Tell the truth about it, or you die!"

"Waal, you needn't shoot me, and wake up the whole house," drawled A. J. "I don't know nothing about them fellers. Hain't seen 'em since I give 'em the shake in York."

(To be continued)

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

WEDDED WITH SKATES ON.

Leroy Jones, local champion amateur roller skater, and Miss Marie Campbell, ardent skating devotee, were married while on roller skates at a local rink, Des Moines, Iowa. The wedding was the result of a dare made by friends of the young couple. They had some difficulty keeping themselves balanced while the minister was repeating the words of the ceremony. The pastor declined to enter into the spirit of the occasion enough to wear skates himself.

ELECTROCUTED IN BATHTUB.

When a portable electric light fell into the bathtub in which she was sitting, Mrs. Josephine Bellows, of Toledo, Ohio, was electrocuted.

Mrs. Bellows, who was twenty-two years old, was alone, her husband having gone to Buffalo. She turned on the water, got into the tub and was reading a magazine while the tub filled. A small portable electric light was attached to a stand beside the tub and this became detached and fell. The bulb was shattered and in trying to catch the cord it is supposed Mrs. Bellows' hand came in contact with the exposed wires.

THE HAND TREE.

A curious tree is growing in Los Angeles, Cal., the seed of which was brought from Mexico. In general appearance it resembles an English walnut. The leaves are much like those of a buttonwood, but very much larger. The most marked peculiarity of the tree is its blossoms, from which it has been named the "hand tree." The flower is an inch and a half in diameter, with short russet sepals and long, reddish lined petals. The fat scarlet pistils protrude an inch beyond. They are so joined as to resemble a hand, with fingernails like the claws of a Chinese grandee. The resemblance to a hand is striking.

BOOTLEGGING.

How craftily bootleggers work in "dry" towns is shown in the following news item taken from the Tulsa (Okla.) Democrat:

Cleverly arranged plans for the concealment of a bountiful supply of intoxicants of the Diamond drug store, 15 East Second street, which had long been suspected but but which hitherto had defied the ingenuity of the searchers, were made known when Sheriff James W. Patton, accompanied by Deputy Sheriffs Walter Overby, Sam Walker and Thomas Powell, raided the place and captured the entire stock of "booze." Ten 5-gallon cans of pure alcohol, twenty-four pints of fine wine of various brands, eight quarts of Holland gin, a 5-gallon keg of whisky partially empty, 141 half pints of whisky, seventy-two quarts of whisky and six suit cases were seized by the officers. Billie Miles, serving a sentence in the county jail for maintaining the drug store as a "booze" selling establishment, is the proprietor of the store.

The store of intoxicants was found on the second floor. Along one side of a large room was a wall apparently solid and without doors or windows. This wall looked as the part of an outside wall of the building and had been examined many times before by the officers without result. The other night, however, Sheriff Patton began tapping the wall near the floor, with the result that a door was discovered. This door closed in such a manner that it failed detection from the sharpest eye until its location became known. When the door was opened a store room containing deep shelves upon which was placed the store of "booze" was revealed. The officers declare it is one of the cleverest places for storing liquor they ever have seen.

WON'T MINT FRENCH COINS.

Uncle Sam is taking no chances on a breach of neutrality with belligerent nations of the world. Rather than risk the possibility of being accused of shipping contraband he has declined to honor inquiries from Europe for work to be done in the Philadelphia Mint.

It developed recently that the French Minister of Finance addressed a communication to the United States Treasury Department at Washington asking whether this Government could mint 2,000,000 25-centime pieces. The order was for nickel "blanks" that were to have been stamped by dies after reaching France. The metal was to be bought in this country on account of the scarcity abroad.

Remembering General Lafayette, the authorities pondered over the matter and then delivered an ultimatum to the effect that the order could not be filled. A formal statement was issued that belligerent nations could not be served in this manner.

Adam Joyce, superintendent of the Philadelphia Mint, parent of the three United States coinage plants, hinted that the Government had probably been moved to decline the inquiries on the ground that, while the "blanks" might be intended for coins, as ordered, there was nothing to prevent their being converted into munitions once they arrived in Europe. The shipment of coins, therefore, might easily be construed as a violation of neutrality, aside from any question as to the contraband character of the goods.

It develops also that the State Department put its foot down on an inquiry for mint machinery from the Russian Government. This inquiry found its way into the Philadelphia Mint, through which it was to have been supplied had the order been accepted. With regard to Russia the same attitude was taken as in the case of France.

While the bars are up against belligerent nations, this Government is doing much minting work for Central and South American countries. A big order is being rushed to completion for Cuba, delivery to be made April 1, and other orders are being filled with South American Governments. The latter have turned to the United States because they have been cut off by the war from mints in England.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

OUR NATIONAL PARKS.

There is in the entire country twenty national parks—Yellowstone, Hot Springs, Ark.; National Zoo Park, Washington, D. C.; Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Georgia and Tennessee; Antietam, Maryland; Rock Creek, District of Columbia; Sequoia, California; General Grant, California; Yosemite, California; Shiloh, Tennessee; Gettysburg, Pennsylvania; Vicksburg, Mississippi; Mount Rainier, Washington; Crater Lake, Oregon; Platt, Oklahoma; Wind Cave, South Dakota; Sully's Hill, North Dakota; Mesa Verde, Colorado; Glacier, Montana. The Yellowstone, in Montana and Wyoming, has an area of 2,142,720 acres.

WHY IS THE SUN HOT?

If we could build up a solid column of ice from the earth to the sun, two miles and a half in diameter, spanning the intervening distance of 93,000,000 miles, and if the sun should concentrate his entire power upon it, it would dissolve in a single second, according to a calculation made by Professor Young. To produce this enormous amount of heat would require the hourly burning of a layer of anthracite coal more than nineteen feet thick over the entire surface of the sun. If the sun were composed of solid coal and we derived our heat from the burning of that coal the sun would burn out in less than 5,000 years, according to the Popular Science Monthly. Since the earth is millions of years old the sun cannot be burning. Its heat must be generated in some more persistent way.

The great German scientist Helmholtz was the first to explain satisfactorily what keeps the sun hot. The sun is not burning; it is heated to the glowing point, like a piece of white-hot iron. Helmholtz found that if we suppose the sun to be contracting by only 250 feet a year we would receive our present amount of heat. In other words, heat is being literally squeezed out of the sun. Professor Newcomb estimated that when the squeezing process has continued for about 7,000,000 years, the sun will be one-half its present size.

MAN 7 FEET 8 INCHES TALL

Fifteen minutes after he gained his freedom from the immigration station on Ellis Island, where he had been detained since February 18, Baptiste Hugo, seven feet eight inches in height, was arrested as he stepped off the Ellis Island boat at the Battery the other evening charged with attacking a photographer who tried to take his photograph.

William Fox, of No. 1331 Clinton avenue, The Bronx, was the photographer. He approached Patrolman Mury, of the Greenwich street police station at the Battery, and asserted Hugo struck him with his walking stick when he attempted to take a photograph of him.

On Fox's complaint Hugo was arrested. In Men's

Night Court Fox failed to appear to press his complaint and Magistrate Koenig discharged Hugo.

In the Greenwich street station Hugo was booked on charge of assault. When policemen attempted to lodge him in a cell difficulties were encountered. It was only after the giant smilingly permitted himself to be wedged crosswise, neither seated nor standing in the iron cage that the door could be shut.

When the automobile patrol took on its quota to the Night Court it was found impossible for Hugo to occupy a seat, owing to his weight of more than 350 pounds. He was forced to lie stretched out on the floor of the motor car, while the other prisoners placed their feet over his body. At that Hugo's feet extended out of the automobile.

TO EXPEDITE SHIFTING OF CARS.

To expedite the shifting of cars in railroad yards and to lessen some of the hazards now generally associated with this work an ingenious Swiss inventor has called to his aid the electro-magnet. So sound were the principles he employed and so practicable was his equipment that the installation is now in daily use upon the switch engines in the busiest yard in Berne.

A form of storage battery locomotive has been built especially for this work. Instead of the usual buffers at the front and rear, the tractor is fitted with iron cylinders, two at each end, and placed where they will be directly in line with the regular buffers on ordinary cars. These iron cylinders are wound about with coils of insulated copper wire, and when an electric current is sent through the cylinders become powerful magnets and exert sufficient force to hold firmly the rounded heads of the car buffers that fit into the outer ends of these magnets. The ends of these magnets, by the way, have dished faces and, with the car buffers, form flexible joints that permit the train to take curves and to allow, besides, for a reasonable measure of vertical movement.

When a car is to be shifted the engineer runs his storage battery locomotive up against the first car of the train to be moved, and just before the four buffers come in contact the electric current is sent through the coils. The moment they touch the effect is as if the car and the locomotive had been coupled, because when the contact is perfect each magnet has a grip of quite 3,800 pounds.

The engineer, standing in his cab, has complete command of the movement of his locomotive and of the gripping and releasing of the cars he is handling. To make or to break his hold by means of his magnetic buffers he has only to operate an electric switch. No one is exposed between the cars, and shifting can be done with exceptional speed and ease, not to mention greatly increased safety. The storage battery locomotives at Berne have been found very practicable, and are more economical than the steam engines for this work.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, MARCH 29, 1916.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Tilefish catches continue to increase. During January 398,000 pounds of the fish were landed at New York, an increase of 135 per cent. over December.

Bergen, one of the most important seaports in Norway, was visited by the most destructive fire in its history on Jan. 15. Estimates of the damage run all the way from \$11,000,000 to \$27,000,000. Practically the whole of the retail business district fell a prey to the flames. In all, 369 buildings were destroyed and 3,000 persons made homeless.

Charles Dobsine, waiter in a local restaurant, Jefferson, Iowa, bet \$1 at even money the other night that he would go ten blocks barefooted in the snow and with the temperature hovering around zero. He found a ready taker for his wages. Dobsine performed the feat and collected his \$1, but both his feet were frozen. The loser said it was worth the money.

A can containing \$300 in gold was uprooted from the ground by a hog on the farm of Bud Ray, near Jones' Mill, in Henry County, Tenn. Mrs. Richard Collins, a neighbor of the Rays, has laid claim to the money. Mrs. Collins says her husband once owned the farm on which the money was found, and that she loaned him the amount contained in the can shortly before his death. After his death, she says, the money could not be found, although his books contained a record reading, "Three hundred dollars canned."

How a man could strike upon the sharp end of a crow-bar, have it pierce his flesh and come out under a rib and still live is the remarkable part of an accident which befell Joseph Blake, of Grass Valley, Cal. He was working at his father's mining claim and was standing upon a bank when he felt the earth give way under him. He jumped and in his excitement did not notice the bar which was sticking out of the ground. It penetrated his back in the lower part and ranged upward toward the waistline and emerged under the lower rib. He was rushed to a sanitarium after his fellow-employees had pulled the bar out of his flesh. It is believed Blake will recover.

Mr. Roosevelt has communicated to the American and the Royal Geographical Societies information received by him from Brazil concerning recent explorations in the drainage basin of the Rio Theodoro, the scene of his own explorations. An expedition was sent out about a year ago, under Lieutenant de Souza, to explore the Rio Ananas, or Pineapple River, which now proves to be identical with the Cardoso, of Roosevelt's maps, emptying into the Theodoro in 10 deg. 58 min. S. It is one of the head-water branches of the Theodoro, but not the major tributary that it had been thought to be. The expedition was a disastrous one. After suffering from shortness of food and illness, the party was attacked by Indians, and the leader was drowned after being wounded with arrows. The party became scattered, and apparently only three of the ten camaradas who had started with de Souza finally reached the Duvida, and ultimately got back to civilization.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

"Mary, I wish you'd send for that quack doctor as quickly as you can." "Why, what's the matter?" "I ate too much duck for dinner."

Willie—Do they play baseball in heaven, mamma?
Mother—Why, no, of course not. Willie—Then, I guess I won't bother about saying my prayers.

Yeast—Why does that fellow walk on the railway? The train might come along and kill him. Crimsonbeak—Yes; but I suppose the poor fellow is afraid of the automobiles.

"And this," said the architect, showing the plans for the new house, "is the master's bedroom." "Yes, yes," said Mr. Henpeck, absently, "but where am I going to sleep?"

"I understand that Mr. Pinchpenny has been operated on for appendicitis?" remarked Miss Cayenne. "Yes, it's the first time any one was known to get anything out of him." "And even then they had to chloroform him to get that."

A beautiful young lady approached the ticket window at the Pennsylvania station and in a voice like the rippling of a brook asked the agent: "What is the fare to the Fair?" To which the agent replied: "Same as to the homely, madam."

"This is the best fishing-place on the lake," said the guide. "I brought a feller here yesterday and he took out fifteen big ones." "Take me somewhere else," ordered the amateur fisherman. "I want a place where there are some fish left."

Mabel was explaining the baseball game to Estelle. "What makes the man with the bat in his hand keep waving it around like that?" inquired Estelle. "Why, you silly goose," answered Mabel, "he does that so the pitcher can't hit it, of course."

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

KILLED WOLF WITH A MOPSTICK.

Since Mabel Henderson, of Menominee, Wis., killed a wolf with a mop-handle she has been kept busy answering letters that poured in from all parts of the country. Some wrote from curiosity to find out what kind of a girl she was, and others merely wanted to congratulate her.

When Miss Henderson stepped out of the house she saw the family dog fighting with the wolf. She seized the mop-handle, the first weapon that came into her hands, and went to the dog's rescue. She killed the wolf and received a bounty of \$10 from the Secretary of State with a personal letter of congratulation, and also \$10 from the county.

The skin of the wolf is being made into a set of furs, which Miss Henderson will take pride in wearing.

"It wasn't much," said Mabel. "I saw the wolf and got mad. I did not think of being in danger myself, and just grabbed the first thing I got my hands on. That was all. I was surprised that the animal did not run away. I guess I surprised him and hit him so hard the first time that he was too stunned to think of getting away. Anyway, I got him and he won't bother our house any more."

INFANT ON A MATTRESS RAFT.

Little Moses Wilkes, year-old son of a Sweetwater, Cal., ranchman, had a far rougher time in the recent flood than did his predecessor of Biblical times in the olden days, according to a story recently told.

When the flood waters began to rush down the Sweetwater River the mother of little Moses placed him on an improvised life raft that had been constructed. The raft was placed near the edge of the river and Moses deposited on a mattress. While the remaining members of the family returned to the house to gather more food supplies the water of the Sweetwater rose so swiftly that they soon started the raft and Moses down the stream.

The little sister of Moses realized what had happened, and, racing down the river banks, kept the raft in sight until it touched the shore, when she rescued Moses from his perilous position. After effecting the rescue it was necessary for the girl to walk miles with Moses in her arms before she reached shelter.

Believing both children lost, Mrs. Wilkes collapsed and is now at the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. D. Stead, near Jamacha.

RUSSIAN MYSTIC REVIVAL.

The Overseas News Agency gives out the following, which it says is private information received from Petrograd:

"The Metropolitan Petrim of Vladicavkaz, together with the Archbishop Varnara, is conducting a revival on an enormous scale. It is a mystic movement which has taken hold of the aristocracy and the lower classes. The Metropolitan and the Archbishop hold liturgical services with

unheard-of pomp, employing the songs of innocent children in order to rouse the masses. They comfort prisoners in jail.

"People say that if Petrograd should be evacuated the Metropolitan and the Archbishop should lead the people, carrying the cross and chanting anthems, so as to prevent political opposition and rebellion.

"At one of the services held by the Archbishop 1,000 persons, including a Grand Duke and other aristocrats, pilgrims, peasants and beggars, stood shoulder to shoulder. When the Archbishop returned to his monastery the people knelt along the roadside in the snow, with the temperature 30 degrees below zero, in order to receive his blessing.

"Eyewitnesses of these scenes compare them with religious ecstasies of mediaeval times. The Holy Synod and the better educated portion of the clergy have protested, but their objections were not heeded by the Emperor."

A RECORD COLD WINTER.

The winter of 1741-42 was colder than any New England winter which had preceded it since the colonists landed at Plymouth, and in no year since has cold so intense or protracted been recorded. As early as November 13, 1741, snow fell over the whole country, and next April it was still covering the fence rows.

An issue of the Boston Post Boy for January 12, 1742, reports a tent erected on the Charles River as an inn for travelers who frequented this great frozen highway. The Boston News Letter for March 6 of the same year relates how "people ride every day from Stratford, Conn., to Long Island, which is three leagues." Even as far east as New London old diaries tell us that "the ice extended into the Sound as far as could be seen from the town, and Fisher's Island was united to the mainland by a solid bed of ice." On March 28 of that remarkable spring the Boston News Letter reports that people living on Thompson's Island had crossed over to Dorchester to church on the ice for the fifteen preceding Sundays.

As late as July 9 an old letter written from New London, Conn., says that on the east side of the Connecticut River a body of ice as large as two carts can draw still remained, clear and solid as at Christmas time, and the quaint old letter writer artlessly adds: "It might lay there a month longer were it not that so many resort out of curiosity to drink punch made out of it." On July 17 snow was still to be found lying in a mass nearly four feet thick in the town of Ipswich.

Probably the most marvelous record left us of that famous winter of 1741-42, according to the Springfield Republican, is the statement made by Alonzo Lewis, author of the "Annals of Lynn, Mass.," that "Francis Lewis, the signer of the Declaration of Independence, drove his horse from New York to Barnstable, the whole length of Long Island Sound, on the ice."

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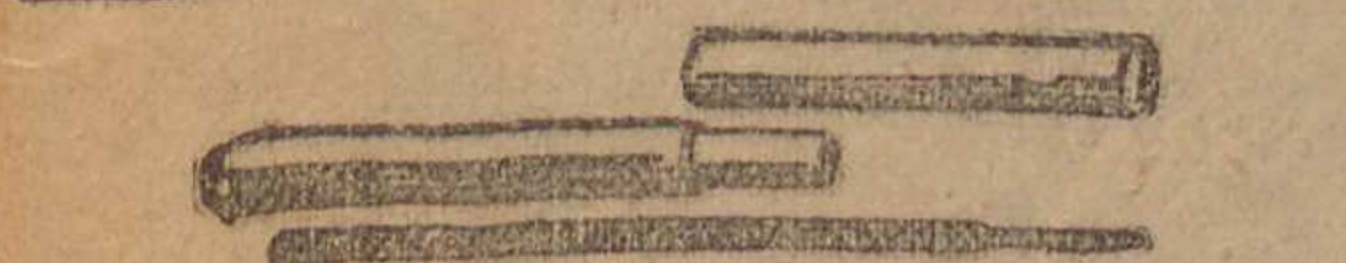
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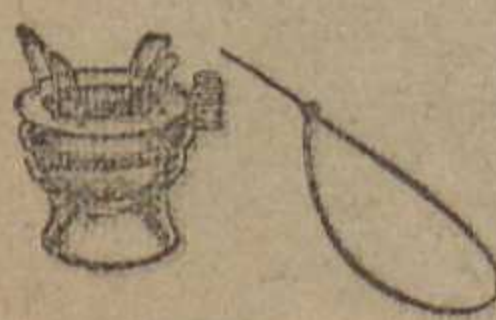
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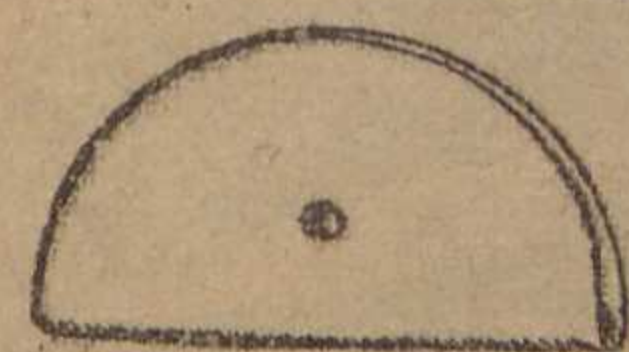
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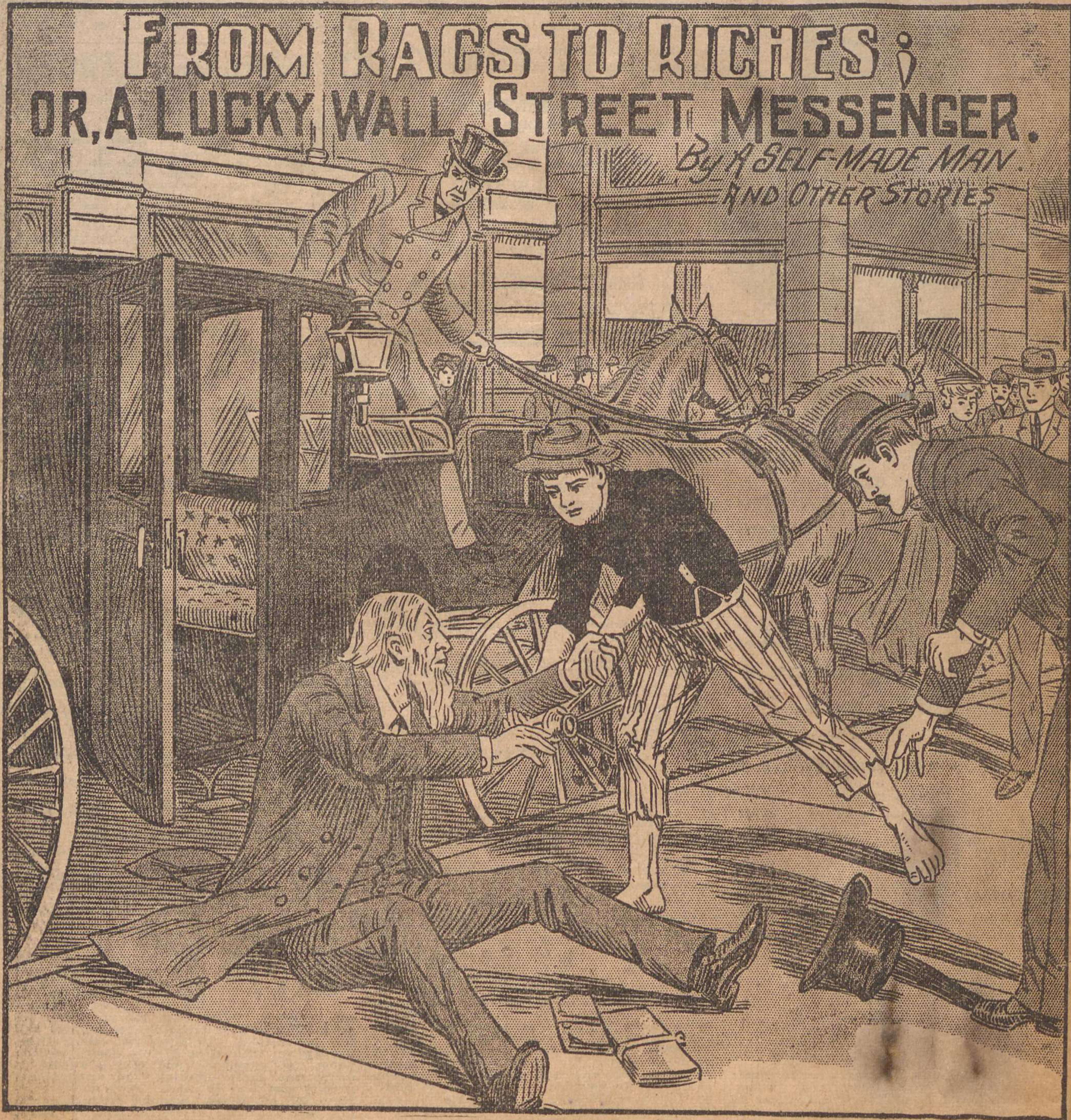
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